

# IT'S ONLY A MOVIE!

ISSUE  
#2

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# IT'S ONLY A MOVIE!

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By Michael Flores

My first contact with TV censorship happened as a child. Presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy had been shot by Sirhan Sirhan while walking through a hotel kitchen. Rumors persist to this day that an Iranian Savack agent (the Shah's secret police) set up the "hit" and was in attendance. Almost immediately Sirhan said he opposed Kennedy supporting nuclear weapon sales to Israel. That story was reported for about five minutes the day after the shooting.

On every newscast, on every news special, "expert" after "expert" came forward to link the shooting of Kennedy with TV violence and the accessibility of handguns. It did not matter that Sirhan was from another country, or that he was a terrorist -- kids cartoons were blasted as being the breeding ground for violence. The nuclear weapons issue would not be in the press again until Sirhan's trial when he brought the subject up. No news station or publication printed what he said. Remember, the U.S. did not understand terrorism in those days. Most Americans did not understand the full implications of Robert Kennedy's murder. They did listen to the "experts" to find some reason for his murder. TV and handguns were convenient targets. Besides, with all the complications of our southeast Asian problems at the time, who was ready to deal with our middle east problems?

Richard Nixon seems to have thought it through. He never mentioned selling nuclear weapons to Israel. He never approved the sale, officially, while in office. Some nuclear materials just happened to "disappear." And were found in Israel.

The night after the tragic murder I cut on Dick Cavett to watch the Three Stooges who were scheduled to be his guests. I saw the worst humiliation the Stooges ever had to endure (well, the worst next to their paychecks--they never got a raise in all those years!). Cavett came out and said it would be "inappropriate" to have the Stooges on. He went on to say that their type of violence on TV was creating a climate of violence in the U.S.

The fact that Sirhan grew up without a TV was lost on the panel who came on Cavett's show to blast TV. And handguns. I was a kid then. There was nothing I could do. I wrote a letter to Moe about how I felt he had given the world and myself a lot of joy. I got back a photo, no note. I don't know if he ever read it. Nobody listens to kids anyway.

If there was ever an ambulance-chaser of causes TV violence is it. Are you a headline grabber of a Senator who blew your first term in an ill-advised run for President? Call a press conference to demand government intervention and censorship of cable TV. Want to get a ton of government money and funding? Announce a study to research the effects of TV on

children then go to the press without any experiments proven by other researchers using your technique and run a string of bromides at them. "Kids watch too much TV," "kids cartoons sell commercials." Guess what? They'll run it! Then you can get EVEN MORE FUNDING! If you try to point out that they are stating opinions and not facts, they will simply counter with "but everybody knows..." and the fact that they hold a degree blinds the press to the obvious.

Robert Kennedy's death was a tragedy in a dual sense. His death scarred America. In its wake, TV was censored, cartoons were cut, imagination stifled. Nixon became president. Political groups discovered that taking hostages, dragging out events and committing acts of savage violence instead of a quick assassination would gain them access to the world press and prevent others from cashing in on their "accomplishments." -- even if the press amounted to lives traded for 30 seconds on the evening news.

We think about, we love, we hate, we fear that monitor staring us in the face.

In this issue, we will champion it. Have fun with it. Examine it. Criticize it. Enjoy!

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# TV OR NOT TV

By Michael Flores

"Twin Peaks" ... (success) is symptomatic of a despair among moviegoers and TV watchers, a loathing of trash that runs so deep it has turned inward against itself. Sick at their hearts of the 'entertainment' they have grown addicted to, and fearsome of trying anything new, Lynch's audiences have embraced his work because he reflects their feelings — he hates movies too."

-- Roger Ebert

**"Rog, baby, LIGHTEN' UP!"**

— Michael Flores

Last issue it was fairly easy to gaze into the past for the origins of "Monty Python." To reflect on TV today is difficult because there is a transition going on in pop culture even as you read this. That I live in the nation that is slowly lumbering toward a new direction makes it more difficult. I cannot claim to be detached from the culture.

Before I get into the weirdfilm movement and emerging narrative styles, let's begin with the box that over the years has inspired loathing, love, and a free babysitting service. The radio.

In 1901 when Guglielmo Marconi sent the letter "S" across the Atlantic by wireless telegraph, demonstrating the power of electromagnetic waves, adults and newspapers paid little, if any, attention. Children were instantly fascinated at the meaning and fantasy of what this could mean. If a letter could be transmitted through the air, why not a word? Or even a picture? Radio became the first fad of America's industrial age, as kids lined up to buy what was then called a "toy" and "hobby." Wireless equipment became a nightmare for parents who couldn't understand kids putting them

together all over the kitchen table or even why anyone would want to spend hours listening to darkness waiting for a word.

World War I brought together two young men who had been touched by wireless fever. R.H.G. Mathews was a Chicagoan who became an amateur radio operator in 1912, and by 1915 had turned his mom's kitchen into a mini-factory where he filled orders for young people around the country. He left all this behind to enlist in the Navy, where he met Karl Hassel from Sharpsville, Pennsylvania. Both of them spent the war working on radio

## CAVALCADE OF TV FAVORITES



**AMOS 'N' ANDY** - As a radio show, "Amos 'N' Andy" was so popular movie theaters would stop movies when the show came on and pipe the program through the theater speakers. As a TV show, it was also a hit — but it deeply divided the Afro-American community. Although judges, policemen and businessmen in the show were usually black, the portrayal of characters like Lightnin' still make many uncomfortable.

The episode when Kinglish and Sapphire relive falling in love by re-staging a meeting in the park may be sitcom TV's most moving portrayal of love. The episode "Raisin' Cain" is comic timing at its best. Period.

The most bootlegged TV show in history. Your video store probably has episodes.



**THE BEVERLY HILLBILLIES** was a sitcom. The most likable white trash on earth had a lesson for the bankers and the rich folks of Beverly Hills, but mainly the gentle nature of the cast made this show a likable goof of a show. Did you know Sharon Tate appeared as one of Mr. Drysdale's secretaries in a few episodes?

and, when they left the Navy, opened a factory -- in Mathew's kitchen.

They approached the Chicago Tribune with an offer the Colonel could not refuse. The boys' enthusiasm caught Colonel McCormick up in its web. Today Colonel McCormick is remembered as a cantankerous right winger. Well, maybe so. But he was the only newspaper editor in the country who saw the power of the radio and he quickly built a long wave radio receiver for the Tribune.

When other newspaper editors discovered that the Chicago Tribune was carrying dispatches from the Versailles Peace Conference 24 hours before their papers, they flooded Chicago with couriers to snatch up the latest editions and rush them back to their newsrooms. Even then, they were still 12 hours behind the Tribune.

Z-NITH was the name of the company which moved from the kitchen to a factory near the Edgewater Beach Hotel. The basic regenerative circuit patent was difficult to obtain, they got one of the last on the market. They began building the "ham" radios, as they came to be called, for some time. Today, that kind of free market expansion is illegal in Chicago. It is illegal to run a factory out of your home. I personally don't think it's fair to pass laws against capitalism, then claim it doesn't work and that we need more government programs. I digress.



Hassel and Mathews met automobile contract genius Eugene McDonald, who came up with the time payment plan that allowed many Americans access to cars. McDonald had fantasized far beyond what the boys had in mind, and discovered they were short on cash and that demand was far exceeding supply. He ordered a special set to be installed in his room at the Athletic Club. In those days Hassel would collect the money after delivering the set. He would not leave, in fact, until he had the payment. McDonald began chatting about the future of radio, deliberately holding back payment until Hassel heard it all. When he finally did get around to paying for the set, he had also told Hassel he would be happy to put up his

own money to bring his dreams to fruition. I can only imagine the excited Hassel rushing to Mathews, hours late, trying to explain all the dreams and hopes he had just heard -- and that the money would be there to help them grow.

Thus was born Zenith from the dreams of young men.

By 1926, Zenith introduced a radio that would run on AC current, free of batteries, and designed to compliment the latest home furnishings. The kids' toy quickly became the center of the living room. In 1931 McDonald developed what he felt was the future of television -- Phonevision. Described as a "home box office," it would bring Americans

Broadway plays and Hollywood films. By 1939, Zenith had gone on the air with W9XZV, the nation's first all-electronic television station. Kukla, Fran and Ollie were the channel's first "stars." In those days the FCC was concerned with the sale of airspace, to prevent conflicting channels, and was not a political or moral voice. The FCC asked Zenith to broadcast the world premier of a MGM movie, "Patrolling the Ether," to see if the audience would watch a program they had never heard of before. TIME magazine immediately caught on to the power of TV and presented "TIME on Television," a sneak preview of their upcoming issues. TIME immediately became a staple in TV homes.



"THE LOVE BOAT" -- OK, friends, it's guilty pleasure time. I loved this show. . . Unlike Spelling's other TV shows ("Fantasy Island," "Hotel") there was always a happy ending on "Love Boat." Andy Warhol even starred in one! The use of odd casts was a major influence on John Waters. The only episode I didn't like was the visit to China show, which had no laugh track. I didn't know when to laugh, I will still watch this show in a pinch.

"THE GONG SHOW" -- Many have tried to imitate this show, but Chuck Barris was the glue that kept it all together. Hated by critics, loved by the people, it still has the power to shock and amuse in reruns.



"SHEENA, QUEEN OF THE JUNGLE" -- Irish McCalla was one of the most exotic and beautiful women on television at a time when most women were portrayed as married or about to be. Sheena battled convicts and renegade tribes. A gossip magazine discovered a peep show film Irish had done -- she was in a two-piece bathing suit frolicking on the beach. The magazine called it an adults-only stag film and the producers quickly dropped the show. The film in question had no nudity or lewdness, but the implication that it was a stag film destroyed this popular show.

In 1947 Phonevision was ready to go. A decoder box that unscrambled the image was tested by 300 Chicago-area families selected by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. The participants received all four Chicago TV stations and a special movie channel. Telephone circuits were used to transmit the images. Australia and New Zealand rushed to buy the system, and that's why these countries have had cable television since 1955.

Eight broadcasting companies applied to the FCC for permission to use the Phonevision system. The networks were not amused.

"Stop Pay TV" became the cry. Long-winded politicians postulated on the end of TV and, unable to rally the necessary support, an exasperated Zenith eventually sold the system to TECO in 1971. Yes, it's true -- we could have had Phonevision in the mid-1950s.

Television grew from radio in terms of programming, as well. When CBS developed Burns and Allen and Jack Beany into TV shows they single-handedly put the dominant Dumont network out of business. These shows had been popular on the radio for years and millions bought TVs just to see the transition. These shows still hold up, by the way.

There was no specialization in those days. A network would have smatterings of art, comedy, wrestling, more wrestling, bowling, lots of bowling, crime shows -- a smorgasbord of visual entertainment right in your own home. If the TV networks hated Phonevision, it was nothing compared to the hatred

Hollywood had for TV. For years, the big studios refused to sell films to television, hoping the 25 year old fad would go away. It got stronger.

TV virtually killed the B-western market when network after network produced westerns until the public was sick of them. This was a pattern the networks would fall into -- one hit would spawn a dozen similar shows. Crime dramas were the next TV wave to bump wrestling and bowling.

The other drawbacks were also obvious. A small group was deciding what America would see. There was no public access. The networks spent too much time imitating each other's shows. The FCC became a political and moral force to be reckoned with. Occasionally something would slip through. Like the first year and a half of "Star Trek," or the prophetic, literary show from across the big pond, "The Prisoner."

"The Prisoner" concerns a secret agent who quits his job and awakens one day to find himself in a village he cannot leave. Gradually, he runs for office, becomes "Number One" and overthrows the totalitarian government. For years, we had only one vision of such a system -- Orwell's "1984," in which the government was unstoppable and all encompassing. Patrick McGoohan pointed out that such a system would be susceptible to breakdown from within. If one looks closely at the career of Gorbachev there is no question that "The Prisoner" was the more accurate portrayal of the future of governments that grow too large -- they begin to slow down and break down. The

ability to read this into the show also means the program is more compelling and worthy of study today than yesterday.

---

**"Sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll...Lynch's work is exclusively concerned with these three elements, but in an angry, self-hating way."**

-- Roger Ebert

---

Hey, Roger, ever hear of "The Avengers"?

Diana Rigg as Emma Peel stunned kids who watched her dressed in leather, fighting women and playing with bondage. This was playful sex, and I have a funny feeling David Lynch loved this show. No program on U.S. television treated such subject matter so playfully. Themes of decadence and perversity saturated "The Avengers" and we loved it for that.

American TV was different. We were locked into the cold war mentality. TV news could not present the middle ground, having one extreme side against another extreme was considered "dramatic TV." It was actually a reflection of the cold war mentality. That worked fine until CNN brought immediate information to the news broadcasts taking the time to cover complex issues, suddenly the network morning and nightly news shows look antiquated. The obsession with good versus bad, one side against the other dominated our film and television.



**"HOWDY DOODY"** - The last show of "Howdy Doody" had kids crying over the loss of their favorite show. The sale of toys related to the show was the first television-style marketing effort aimed at kids.



**"THE JACK BENNY SHOW"** - The Dumont Network survived World War II, but when CBS signed radio star Jack Benny in 1950 it was all over for Dumont. The show was popular for over 14 years. The episode with Oscar Levant is shocking, the show where Benny meets real-life wife/TV girlfriend Mary Livingston funny -- you can't go wrong watching Jack Benny.

Yet through it all we glimpsed different narrative forms. "Green Acres" turned the sitcom format upsidedown. Here and there programs would pop up, usually scorned by most adults and critics, but we saw them. Mr. Ebert, the Hollywood conventions that David Lynch scorers deserve to be scorned. It is old cold war thinking. It may bug you that the new breed of weirdfilm owes more to Martin Scorsese than Hollywood's more mainstream directors, but this is what we grew up on. We want more from narrative form than black versus white. More and more of us are seeing a world of grays. David Lynch reflects that thinking. Check out our Clive Barker interview in this issue for more discussion of TV and "Twin Peaks."

We want to regain the imaginative spirit that led Zenith to the top. We want the right to be creative. And we aren't kids anymore. Hell, even our kids aren't kids anymore. Bart Simpson is a brilliant characterization of a kid who knows far more than his parents, but is trapped in the adult world where kids have no voice. It may be the most honest show about families on television.

If you can get past Christina Applegate, who I think is the prettiest woman on television right now, "Married With Children" emerges as the most subversive show on TV. Greedy mom, dumb dad, kids lost in the logic of their family. "Married With Children" is enough reality mixed with standard sitcom format to show the formula itself to be faulty. Read that again, Mr. Ebert. The conventional

formula is what is at fault. Not the satire of it.

Soon, even the term "TV" will be out of date. I have a monitor — that is one-third of my home entertainment system. A VCR and cable are the other two-thirds. I don't have to sit still for bullshit anymore. With a camera, I can do my own programming. The widespread popularity of the video camera has even led to a hit TV show, "America's Funniest Home Videos." We have to stay imaginative and find new narrative forms, Mr. Ebert, now that the cold war is over.

In England, television is on the verge of being deregulated. The Labour Party fought tooth and nail to prevent enterprise from taking over the TV business. They lost. Part of this victory is due to Channel 4, an experimental non-government channel and TV host Jonathon Scott (England's David Letterman). He produced "The Incredibly Strange Film Show" series, the best documentaries ever made about B



filmmakers Russ Meyer, Ed Wood, T.V. Mikels, H.G. Lewis, and many other unsung American heroes.

Give the David Lynch's of the world room to be creative and find new narrative forms, Mr. Ebert, or prepare for the onslaught of British TV freed of the meddling of government flooding our airwaves. If that doesn't pan out I'll just rent more videos. The networks need me, if they want me they'd better get weird.

Television is dead. Long live the monitor.

**"MAX HEADROOM"** may have been short-lived as a drama, but in that short time it altered TV editing techniques and managed to attack TV at the same time. Actually, Max's talk show on cable was more fun.



**"DAVID LETTERMAN"** - I was unemployed when I saw Letterman's morning show and immediately decided it was the best thing on daytime TV. When David moved to night time he pushed the limits of talk TV with specials that went beyond *Steve & Ed*. Sadly, when GE bought NBC (they cut David's budget, ending the marvelous specials they became known for. Who can forget Brother Theodore (along with Pat Boone) on the X-Mas special? If you have any of the morning shows contact me at once!



# MONSTERS AND MESSAGES

By Candi Strecker

The funny thing about TV shows is that they're full of so many messages. Sometimes the messages they intend to beam out to you aren't quite the ones you walk away with. And sometimes the good messages they send out are so revolutionary that they have to be buried very deeply, so that the people who put them in probably can't be sure those messages will ever get out and do their good work on the other side. On the receiving end, I'm never sure if the good messages I'm picking up were deliberately put there or just happened to exist as a chance by-product, like planting trees because they're beautiful and getting more oxygen in your environment as a bonus. Sitcoms are especially fun to look at in terms of messages, because on the surface, they aren't supposed to have messages. Which is bunk, of course. A lot of revolutionary thought in the last score of years has involved pointing out subtle messages inherent just in depicting situations as representing normality -- that the real life they show is appropriate life. *Mom Is In The Kitchen*, is one message. *Mom Is In The Office* is another message, although people doing the pointing-out usually don't get around to pointing

out that this new message is a message, because it's the thing that they have a stake in presenting as normal, appropriate life. I could probably talk about the various messages hidden in American sitcoms all the livelong day, but to me the most interesting sitcoms of all, messagewise, are two that have approximately the same silly premise and that, coincidentally, were broadcast during the same years in the 1960s. Because what's wonderful about these two superficial shows is that when you take out your message decoder ring and look closely at them, the alienness disappears and they couldn't be more different in their messages.

The two shows I'm thinking about are *The Addams Family* and *The Munsters*, which ran from September 1964 thru September 1966. The premise they shared was that of a family composed of various types of monsters, like vampires, witches and "Frankensteins," and the problems they would have in dealing with normal suburban neighbors. Cute stuff, the networks must have said. Lots of opportunities for double-takes and reaction shots. Why, the scripts almost write themselves. Plus there's an un-

dercurrent in shows like these (and lots of other "fantasy" shows of the time, like "Bewitched"), that they were really a way a safely speaking, in code, about the taboo topic of immigrant identity and assimilation, and thus a way of doing ethnic jokes. It was touchy business to write a show in which a Mama Goldberg or Mama Pappadopolous embarrasses her son by making some delicacy from the Old Country for him to take to the school bake sale. But you could have Mrs. Munster giving Eddie a batch of eye-of-the-newt cupcakes to take to the bake sale, since there's no Munster Pride Committee to threaten to boycott the network for not presenting a sufficiently positive image of Munsters (nor, for that matter, an Anti-Munster Assimilation League to protest that Munsters are appearing on TV at all).

The Munsters' family members were clearly drawn from well-known monster types: Grandpa is a vampire, Eddie is a werewolf, and so on. *The Addams Family*, based on a series of one-panel cartoons drawn by Charles Addams for the *New Yorker* over the course of decades, depicting a family whose members don't seem to belong

"SCOUTS" - The producers went to Jack Kerouac and asked to do a show on his life and travels. Jack made his demands, the producers said forget it, and they did "Scouts" as a fictional story. Despite this, two episodes are recognized classics - the Halloween show starring Tom Chaney, Peter Lorre and Boris Karloff and "The Thin Line" episode in which Martin Milner takes LSD and spends the entire show on a trip. George Michaels, one of the stars, was later ruined by Rock Hudson who revealed to Confidential magazine that Michaels had been busted for Lewd conduct at a gas station in return for Confidential canceling a story on Hudson's homosexuality. (See next issue for a no-holds barred look at gossip magazines.)



"SQUARE PEGS" - This show, about new wave kids trapped in a high school full of squares was so much better than it had to be and was too close to home. Two years after "Pegs" went off the air, most high schools had new wave factions. When "Square Pegs" was on the air, most high schools didn't. Jamie Gertz who went on to portray an incredibly sexy vampire in "The Lost Boys" was great on this show. The best episode had to be DEVO's appearance at a bat mitzvah,

to any known monster species. They're not literally ghouls, but the word "ghoulish" seems to capture their macabre style of non-normalcy. In both shows, the set-up was to bring these strange-looking, strange-acting characters into contact with people from the real world, and watch the normals freak. Laughs ensue. It's the Bizarro Principle, familiar to all readers of Superman comics: turn the world upside down, run things opposite to the rules we all know, and presto, it's funny. Horses can't talk, so a talking horse is funny. Hillbillies are poor, so rich hillbillies are funny. Monsters aren't normal, so monsters acting normal is funny. (In both shows, it was essential that the monster families be unaware of the unusualness of their behavior. "My goodness, I wonder why the nice man ran out the door when I showed him my shrunken-head collection?")

Under all the gags and cobwebs, there was one big difference between the two shows. The Munsters were terribly anxious to be normal, to be accepted. Clearly, if you could follow the characters down the years to the present, by now they'd be indistinguishable from their neighbors. Herman would have gotten plastic surgery to remove the bolts from his neck, Lily would have given up her gravesclothes gown for a nice Liz Claiborne jogging suit, and Eddie would be blow-drying his hair to hide his widow's-peak hairline. Their haunted house would have been remodeled into a pastel fake-farmhouse. Now and then they'd have an embarrassed little laugh together as

they looked at pictures of themselves from 1964. In a word, the Munsters would have assimilated.

But not the Addamses. The category of monsters that they fit into was the one Americans find the most frightening: they were eccentrics. They weren't monsters by birth, but by choice! And the secret message I took from this TV show when I watched it as a kid was this: in the privacy of your own home, among your own family,



you could have things just the way you like them. You could set up your model railroad with explosive charges under the bridges; you could use funny 1920s telephones or listen to harpsichord music or wear a velvet smoking jacket. You could keep the thorns and throw away the roses, if you

wished. You could be madly, erotically in love with your spouse and dress in strange outfits just because those were the outfits the two of you liked to see each other in. There could be insane Victorian furniture and mounted trophy heads and spiked iron fences and children named Wednesday and Pugsley, which is exactly what I want to name my children if ever I have any. And the punch line of the whole show was that they were so happy! It wasn't the simpy kind of "give me a hug honey, aren't we lucky to have such a wonderful warm family" end-of-the-episode gush that's written into conventional sitcoms. The Addamses were happy in the middle of the show too, repeatedly, and every time they did the things they liked they'd exchange looks of manic delight. Look, I finally blew up the bridge just right! Doesn't the new tombstone make a wonderful garden ornament! Guess what, dear, there's a full moon tonight and we can all sit of the roof and bask in its pale beams! Their lives were theirs to live. The Munsters were slaves (like the Bundys and the Bunkers and the Ricardos) and the Addamses were free. It was just that simple. End of message. And I'm certain that a little bit of what I am today, I am because of it.

**THE TONIGHT SHOW** - In 1963 it became hip in New York to stay up late at night and watch Steve Allen host *Atmospheric*, anything goes format. The show became popular nationally and introduced Lenny Bruce, many jazz artists, and cool 50s counterculture acts. Sadly, in the mid-1960s, NBC destroyed all episodes that Allen hosted, along with the early *Carson* episodes; NBC needed the storage space. In this photo Steve opens a show waking up in mid-air in Times Square. And they said the 60s were unique.



**ERNIE KOVACS**  
How hip was Steve Allen? When his show was at its height he had Kovacs hired to host the show twice a week. Kovacs went on to do the most imaginative bits on television.

# MR. ED EXPOSED!

## WILBUR POST WAS NUTS!

By Cecil Doyle

It's a nightly event in my living room. A barn door in glorious black and white wraps itself across the front of the TV tube. Accompanied almost immediately by a hearty neigh, this barrier is pushed open to reveal the long and infinitely expressive face of the Magnificent Equine of Entertainment. Stud-dom then truly shows its face and introduces himself into our hearts and minds... "Hello. I'm Mr. Ed." Still shown in a few local markets (but now a secure fixture on the Nickelodeon cable network), this classic Filmways presentation (originally aired on CBS from 1961-1965) has somehow taken strides in entertainment value through the years. What was light-hearted kids fare during my formative school years has become a Freudian field day for me now that I've entered my early thirties. Not that we should over-intellectualize the quaint simplicity and historic darts their particular outlets of worship were scoring on most critics' bullseyes... well, let's just say I've pinned my tail on a horse.

While a small cult following has always embraced the show, it appears as

though a good 15-20 year time lapse was needed to enable our technogeneration to properly extend its third eye and lovingly embrace the product of a more cable-free, innocent time — void of anything stressful to the working man other than how he could lie to his wife and friends to cover up his idiosyncrasies. The residents of 17230 Valley Spring Road could be summed up as lovable characters cursed with an unending flood of wacky dilemmas instigated by a well-versed palomino. But, lately, my synopsis consists of this underlying current of mental decay brought about by a baby-boom era bourgeois existence complicated by schizophrenia. Consider the cast of characters in this morality play.

Wilbur Post (played to the hilt by the incredible Alan Young), the central figure of the show. A well-to-do but silly architect and proprietor of the American Dream. He's hitched onto a Fabulous Babe and bought a nice spread with a barn he plans to convert into an office. What a life! But, unbeknown to him, he's also inherited the horse belonging to the previously owner of the estate. He's also inherited the proverbial pain in the ass! The steed speaks English but refuses to demonstrate his rare talent to

anyone but Wilbur. As time goes on, Wilbur becomes distant and strange to all who are associated with him. In essence, it appears of Post has snapped. Throughout the run of the series his behavior progressively becomes stranger and more self-centered. It is evident that Wilbur has developed a strong second personality, and he has, in his mind, manifested this "other Wilbur" (per se) onto his palomino. Thus, he is now in control, somewhat, of all that he has recently acquired (i.e., a career, new wife, new house, etc.), his biggest flaw is in not accepting his awful disorder, thus becoming a nuisance... but, at least, a loveable one.

Mister Ed (played by himself—voice of Rocky Lane), the great character of the series and one of the greatest characters in television history. A hip, entertaining soul in love with an easy life and his kind, but eccentric, owner. Ed is everything Wilbur, the architect, should be — willing to experiment and take chances in life while Wilbur is dull and set in his ways. Ed is spontaneous and witty. How lucky we, the viewers, are to be able to study Ed through the eyes of Wilbur and not the others in his life. Of course, the entire show is merely the image of the world as seen

"*MY THREE SONS*" was a so-so show, but one episode stretched its formula to the breaking point. Fred MacMurray picks up Billy Barty and is seen apparently talking to himself by one of his sons who doesn't realize Ed has a midget in the car. On the drive, Fred discovers a parallel universe family that is the female version (Mom and three daughters in a seemingly identical house) of the Douglas household. Wow!



"*SECRET AGENT*" was a spin-off of the "Dangerman" British show. Watching "Secret Agent" will remind you that Patrick McGoohan would have made a great James Bond (he turned down the role), and it also had one of the greatest theme songs in TV history. The good news is that "Dangerman" and "Secret Agent" will be returning to TV.



in Wilbur's mind. It's in black and white, like a man's dream...and get a load of those backgrounds. This ain't reality, huh. Ed's undying affection for his owner and jealousy of his wife further strengthens my split personality interpretation because Wilbur shows himself often as being rather self-centered. One half of his mind continually debating and challenging the other. Having ridiculous conversations with himself, all the while believing Ed is the one provoking and entertaining him. How awful it would be to actually see Wilbur converse himself into a frenzy each evening. It wouldn't be entertaining.

Mr. Ed was actually a horse taught by Les Hilton and directed on film by Arthur Luhin, who was no newcomer to filming converse critters. He had done the Francis movies during the 50's hut, despite what people like John Waters have stated, Ed will go down in history as the epitome of the discourse horse. So what if Francis kicked people in the ass. Ed was a damn star, man! His theme song is probably the most memory-latching tune to ever take your mind hostage. His voice is the essence of eating rice 'n gravy at your grandma's house on Sunday. Ed is love.

Carol Post (Connie Hines), the perfect wife. Pretty, young, unboundingly cheerful, subservient and stacked! Endlessly slaving over vacuum cleaner or stove. Wilbur's fits of bizarre behavior are her sole curse in life. While her "architect squeeze" is able to furnish her existence with a comfortable home and great clothes to wear, there's a constant cloud of insecurity looming over her little blonde head.

She knows he cares for that damn horse more than anything. But no matter how inconsiderate the hubby gets, she's quick to ignore or forgive with a heartmelting smile and a kiss. I've always been curious about their sex life, though. Why do they sleep in separate beds? (Yeah, I know it was the early sixties and the television and moral standards were pretty strict, but you aren't courting reality in this discussion now, are you?) Anyway, undoubtedly the best looking housewife in TV history.

Roger and Kay Addison (Larry Keating and Edna Skinner), the neighbors. The series made a point of nearly always having close friends or relatives in proximity to catch Wilbur in his strange actions and show concern or ridicule. These two were my favorite of this class of regular characters. Cranky Ol' Lemonpuss and his shopaholic better half...a hit elderly, in fact, to the newlywed Posts. Like opposite poles attracted to and attached for life. Despite Roger's bad attitude and Kay's compulsion to spend and charge like there's no tomorrow, these two hold some unknown likeable sort of aura over their heads. Too bad Keating had to kick the bucket before the series ended. A strangely devoted soul who spent the last six months of his life finishing his seasonal shoot, all the while knowing he was terminally ill. Died a week after finishing his last episode. The Addisons faded out of the scene without a mention to be replaced by new neighbors: Gordon and Winnie Kirkwood (Leon Ames and Florence MacMichael). When the Kirkwoods weren't around it was either Kay's brother (played by Jack

Albertson) or Carol's father around to catch Wilbur in the act of being daft. Only a scant few episodes feature the Posts holding the entire show upon their shoulders.

The entire series comes off as something from another dimension. While the writing could have been a lot better, the characters were strong and quite charming. Ed had the opportunity to use nearly every play on words pertaining to horses imaginable (one key writer was Lou Derman, who went on to 'All in the Family'). The 143 episodes featured the world's first glimpses of a palomino driving a truck, surfing, parachuting, sliding-in for a home run, recording a couple of hit songs, beating a pool shark, reciting the Gettysburg Address and sleeping in a bed. Admit it. You've got to find something at least, er...cute about Mr. Ed.

Now, I'm not taking anything away from Ralph Cramden, Lucy Ricardo or Barney Fife, but the time has finally arrived for all who can derive fathomless enjoyment from series like "Green Acres," "The Prisoner," "My Mother the Car," and, naturally, "Mr. Ed," to help underappreciated classic TV achieve a more respectable position in the hearts and minds of America.

*Get Cecil Doyle's great zine Sub-Human by sending \$5 checks payable to Cecil Doyle, P.O. Box 53735, Lafayette, LA 70505.*



In 1966 when "DARK SHADOWS" began most kids didn't pay it much attention. A year later, when Jonathan Frid appeared as Barnabas Collins, the show became a mega-hit. The Collins home and Collinport played important parts, as did John Bennett, who also played a great, cold-hearted bitch in "Suspiria." Louis Edmunds, who went on to do "All My Children" was also very good. Jonathan Frid's portrayal of Barnabas Collins gave the show an eerie atmosphere that was also greater than the storyline. The kids who grew up on "Dark Shadows" would make "General Hospital" and "All My Children" hits during their college years and, as adults, would make "The Simpsons" and "Twin Peaks" popular.

# FROM "MY MOTHER THE CAR" TO "GREEN ACRES"

By Michael Flores

Before there was a weirdfilm movement or an audience to appreciate it, NBC introduced the most bizarre concept ever on TV. "My Mother the Car" premiered in 1965 and immediately gained the reputation of being the worst show on TV. For most TV critics, hatred of the medium has been a pre-requisite to getting the job. This was especially true of the 1960s when the majority of shows (from "The Untouchables" to "The Beverly Hillbillies") loved by the audience were bated by the critics.

"My Mother the Car," was the first weird TV show, more disturbing in many ways, than the "Twilight Zone" morality plays because the premise was treated as matter of fact -- Jerry Van Dyke's mother had been reincarnated as an antique car that advised him on various problems he got into during the course of the show's brief season. People who believed in reincarnation were stunned to discover that the show actually made an effort to be consistent with those beliefs.

Right wingers howled at an episode about belly dancing in which a prudish couple discover the delights of wild love making. Critics were vehement in their disdain.

Sadly, being ahead of your time translates to being wrong. The show vanished without a trace, having offended almost everybody. If the producers released the show to video or even the Nickelodeon cable channel, I believe it would immediately become a "cult hit." Would there have been talking pigs or "Twin Peaks" on



TV if this show never aired? Probably not.

Speaking of talking pigs, Arnold Ziffle was "Green Acres," but the genius who made the show work was Dick Chevillat. Dick wrote the best, most

"redneck surrealist" (as Del Close refers to the show) episodes in the series. In Chevillat's world, repeating a particular number would cause electrical appliances to turn on, Arnold to be drafted and spacemen to communicate with Eb. The credits could not roll or theme music play without a mention from the characters. Who can forget when Eva Gabor opened a beauty parlor where all the hairstyle-creations look like the ones the B-52s now wear?

Chevillat cut his teeth writing one of the best 1940s comedies, "The Phil Harris and Alice Faye Show, a spin off of the great "Jack Benny Program." On "Phil Harris," weird situations would often develop between Harris and his musician pal Remly, like the time they stuck the next door neighbor kid in the oven and tried to gas him.

That element of weirdness made "Green Acres" a show that still stands up, a modern fairy tale. It didn't hurt that the show featured a great straight man, Eddie Albert, who, by playing his part "normal," created the anchor for the show's weirdness. Sadly, a recent reunion show ignored all the surreal aspects of the program. Without Dick Chevillat's writing, the show became just another sitcom.



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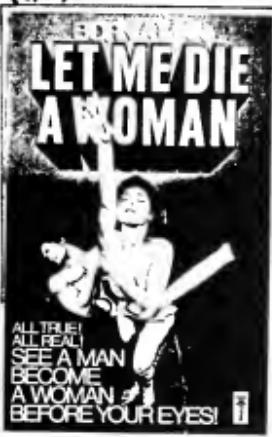
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ring! Stars Charles Bronson

ONE  
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BEYOND



# CLIVE BARKER'S SECRET DESIRES!

## "I Want More Weird!"

By Michael Flores

I received a call from Stephanie Long of Media Home Entertainment inviting local Psychotronic Film Society members (if you live in Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Indiana or Michigan and are 21 or older, you become a member with your subscription to It's Only A Movie and you'll receive notification of our weekly programs -- when visiting Chicago call 312/738-0983 for info on film society events and parties) to a party celebrating the August release of "Nightbreed" to video.

We met at the beautiful Palmer House in Chicago -- every visitor should drop in and gaze at the lobby. Media Home Entertainment provided food and booze, Clive was terrific -- signing autographs and meeting people. "Henry" director John McNaughton had an opportunity to give Clive a copy of "Henry" for his viewing pleasure. John Dugan, the original Grandpa in "Texas Chainsaw Massacre" was there. I now have about 20 of Clive's works autographed (which I'll never part with). He also did a drawing for me on the back of a file folder, which can best be described as "It's Only A Vasectomy."

We met and talked about a range of topics in the interview that follows. Thanks again to Clive for being fabulous to all of us, and to Media Home Entertainment for the eats and Stephanie Long, too. She's easy on the eyes, if you know what I mean.

*IOAM: I hear you had lunch with Dario Argento last week. (See IOAM issue #1 for "Operatic Gore: Dario Argento and Suspiria")*

CLIVE: Yes, I was in Milan for a big party and show organized by Krizia, one of the big fashion houses. Every year they have a film festival and I was one of the guest this year. Dario was my interviewer.

*IOAM: Does he speak English?*

CLIVE: Fluently. I don't know Italian.

*IOAM: What do you think of his films?*

CLIVE: I love his pictures! I always go to see his pictures! In England we have a very bad history when it comes to treating Argento's pictures. They come and go with very little promotion and are cut. I guess it's the same thing here.

In Italy he is god. I got in a cab with him and the cab driver could not believe Dario was in his cab. The driver was excited -- it was something.

While I was in Italy I picked up the uncut "Tenebrae" and "Opera." I also picked up the uncut "Suspiria." He's great. I had seen "Opera" in Rome when it first opened theatrically and had not realized that there were three minutes missing from it. I sort of had it in my head that Italian censors were relatively lenient. I was wrong.

*IOAM: I noticed that Italian films about the witch hunts that show the witches as actually having supernatural powers pass, but if the film states that the witches had no powers and were per-*

*secuted the film has immediate censorship problems in Italy.*

CLIVE: That's interesting. There is a marvelous subtext at work there.

*IOAM: Here, in the States, the MPAA has not announced any change in the way they rate movies, but I think they have made a change. I think when they rate these movies they do so with video rentals in mind, not audiences in movie theaters.*

CLIVE: In England we've got a situation where there exists a dual rating system so everything is rated twice. That, in effect, I'm sad to say, means it gets cut twice. It gets cut once for theatrical release and once for video release. Social mores change and in England we are becoming more conservative. Here too, I think.

*IOAM: We just ended the cold war with the Russians and, I'm sure you've heard the saying, at the end of a war the two opposing sides will exchange aspects of their culture. Japan at the end of the war, for example, took many aspects of our culture.*

*In this sense, the Russians got the best part of the deal. They are experimenting with freedom in films, plays, paintings, pornography, writing -- a lifting of censorship in general. We are going the opposite direction and trying to restrict everything that is connected to the imagination. We are trying to keep art from getting "out of control."*

CLIVE: The idea of "out of control" is what is interesting to me!

It usually comes down to minutiae -- it usually comes down to individual



Clive and Mike  
Photo Copyright 1990 Pat Schenning

frames. After about the fourth meeting with the MPAA you are talking about the third frame in the overall scene of a knife going in a throat being cut. At the point when you begin talking about a frame here or a frame there the whole process becomes absurd. You find yourself arguing over intent and the category that really worries me — weird. They can get upset if your work is too weird.

I think the Smurfs are weird. So I don't know what the weirdness factor is.

*IOAM: Does the unrated version help or hurt in rentals and theatrical release?*

CLIVE: It hurts. You never sell enough unrated versions at stores. You can't advertise unrated films in most newspapers. It is a real stumbling block.

*IOAM: I only know of two possible ways to stop the MPAA if they don't compromise. One, is to show in court that they do not apply the standards of ratings, whatever those are, in a uniform way. Another would be to challenge the constitutionality of the MPAA and abolish it altogether. If they compromise both steps could be avoided.*

CLIVE: I notice that newspapers are running ads for "The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover." Have you seen that film, Michael?

*IOAM: No.*

CLIVE: You must. It's very good and extremely violent. It is playing the art house circuit so I'm glad the papers are running the ads.

I think the MPAA or any other agency will have to go a long, long way to make videos safe for the home. To make a film so bland that you needn't worry that a six year-old in the house

could turn it on — you would have to lower everything to the level of Saturday morning cartoons. They can't do that. People want far more.

*IOAM: It was interesting to see the reaction to "Twin Peaks" in the media. Even publications like Entertainment Weekly were predicting massive viewer turn-offs during the first episode. TV critic after TV critic said it could not find an audience.*

CLIVE: "Twin Peaks" is a David Lynch product and that is a big plus. The show was hyped brilliantly before it came on. Disparaging critical words or not, the audience had the feeling that something special was going to come on.

I think if an anonymous person came along with the exact same idea the entire scenario would have been different. I question if the current generation of programmers could recognize the benefits of weird film.

*IOAM: I keep hoping the British idea of the mini-series which isn't simply rooted in costume drama, as America's are, will catch on here.*

CLIVE: The mini-series came from here! You guys had the format but narrowed it down to one type of historical drama. It has been here for years. The problem is the format. It's the sensibility that actually makes TV. You have the limited series. You have the formats. The problem is the minds aren't available to TV. There are no departments searching out trends, looking for weird new things.

*IOAM: There aren't people like me working for TV companies.*

CLIVE: Exactly! A trend will come about only because people have been hit on the head with it, when it's too big

to ignore. If you even said "I'm interested in weird, multi-level trends," they wouldn't know what you meant. You run into the attitude all the time of, "Well, I get it, but it's too much for an average audience." There are 14,000 other things I'd rather do than convince that person that the audience couldn't possibly be as dumb as they think.

There is such a low opinion of the audience. They are convinced middle America just won't think for itself. These are decisions made by educated men and they are mostly men. Even if "Twin Peaks" has a huge last show viewership, they will all be out in full force explaining why "Twin Peaks" didn't count. I'm serious.

*IOAM: There is a growing cable consciousness. People in Kansas know what the latest Paris fashions will be. There is an array of information out there.*

CLIVE: The problem is that the larger the information format, the blander it will be. Michael, you are going to be under tremendous pressure to reach numbers. Not just *It's Only A Movie*, but when the industry realizes what you're up to, and that it's succeeding. Your biggest problem will be maintaining your views.

*IOAM: Well, I figure I won't be had until the day I put *Freddy and Jason* on the cover.*

CLIVE: (laughter) Got it on one! Exactly. Exactly. But, Mike, those kinds of sellouts happen every day, on every level. You will have to be on your guard.

The fundamental tension is between the desire to be popular and the desire to be right there, in the texture of cul-

Photos Copyright 1990 Pat Schemm





Left, John McNaughton, director of "Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer," meets Clive. Right, Clive with John Dugan, Grandpa in the original "Saw." Photos Copyright 1990 Pat Schanning



ture. At the heart of it, you can only try to be as subversive as you can. If you stay in one spot too long, if they anticipate your next move, you will be swallowed up. This is a difficult tension to live with. It also can force you to remain one step ahead.

It isn't just horror that is subversive. Any works of the imagination are seen as threats and subversion by those who don't have an imagination. The things that subverted my bourgeois soul when I was a kid were works of fantasy that came from very normal material.

*IQAM: Like the Bible?*

CLIVE: Absolutely. Or seemingly innocent things like Disney's "Pinocchio." I'm sure the guys working on it were obsessives. By the time Disney got to the "Adventures of Robin Hood," all the underlying dark and scary material was gone. Now, oddly, it is back again.

Fairy tales have all that transformation stuff and I've always been interested in that. They are images of transformation that are frightening like Pinocchio's friend turning into a wolf. But there are also transformations that are miraculous and transcend to a higher form.

The metaphor is very immediate and yet has layers of meaning. I think I caught on very early. I know "Peter Pan" was about much more than trying not to grow up. I think we all get that there is more going on in the uncensored "Grimm's Fairy Tales" than meets the eye and that's why we go back to these stories over and over. There is a puzzle in these stories, a

puzzle that reveals each story's inner meaning. Every time I go back to the Brothers Grimm I discover more.

When I first read "Hansel and Gretel" I identified with the kids. As I got older, I began to see the witches side of the story. I started to wonder what the parents were doing sending the kids out into the forest.

*IQAM: Is "Nightbreed" based on those fairy tales?*

CLIVE: It comes from two places. I wanted to do something that was not hard-core horror. My favorite review of "Nightbreed" was Joe Bob's, which I hadn't seen until it's Only A Movie. That was great. I love that review.

Another reviewer said that "Nightbreed" was like Indiana Jones on acid. I thought that was OK. This guy got it.

We talked about Dario Argento and I wanted to make a film that was right there -- a world you could get into. And would keep doing weird shit on you. I also wanted the film to be a celebration of monsters. I wanted to pit the stalk-and-slash monster against this other tradition of monsters. What was very instructive to me was when FOX had the choice of emphasizing the stalk-and-slash monster or 200 monsters they chose the stalk-and-slash for the ad campaign.

They sent out no stills on the other monsters. Only photos emphasizing the slasher part of the movie. What they did was promote this small part of the movie which was like every horror movie of the last ten years.

*IQAM: Because that is what they knew how to promote.*

CLIVE: They took the path of least resistance. I did Roy Leondard's radio show before the film opened and said that I thought 20th Century Fox was going to screw it up. It was oddly reassuring to me that I was right. They did screw it up. They ended up over-emphasizing a part of the movie that was about ten minutes of the film.

*IQAM: Luckily, now there are video releases and foreign distribution -- it's now a multi-level releasing system so problems can be corrected at any given level.*

CLIVE: Absolutely. "Hellraiser" was a very modest theatrical hit -- but a big video store hit. Dario said that every film has three lives. It has a critical life. The audience life. And, it's video life. It can find a cult life through video.

Video makes it a single work. It is not a movie by John Waters. They are an attitude. An ambience. I think that's pretty interesting.

The films of David Lynch have a definite feel to them. It doesn't matter what makes them work. It could be a sparrow on the window sill at the end of "Blue Velvet." When asked what it meant, all he ever said was "It makes you think." The answer is that there is no answer.

John Waters inhabits a weird world and has no need to apologize for it. He doesn't even have to explain it.

It dawns on me that we have just named three people who have a "fuck you if you don't like" attitude.

*JOAM: This is a new genre! Maybe "Weirdfilm," as one word.*

**CLIVE:** None of these people have had major commercial hits! "Elephant Man," "Blue Velvet," these films did not achieve superstar status, although the critical acclaim was there and there were profits. After cost and expenses, you'd be surprised.

You can't get hung up on Hollywood vision. They are only part of the strategy, now. You have to hold on to your vision.

*JOAM: Are you influenced by S&M?*

**CLIVE:** Very! The whole idea of the secret life of the libido, Dario mentioned that to me as an influence. That is very important to what I do. The pleasure-pain concept is a large part of fantasy. Look at any book on women's fantasies and the pillage and rape chapters always play a large part in the books. This is repressed more here than in European countries.

*JOAM: Madonna has a song about being spanked on her latest release. We do not have the equivalent of the German leather shops, or even the family restaurants in England in which the waitresses dress like maids and ad-*

*minister spankings to their naughty patrons. It is still shocking here.*

**CLIVE:** Madonna said she liked the kind of spanking she gets when she's not being had. (laughter) Many people play these games, it just isn't something that comes up in public like it does in Europe.

There is far more going on behind closed doors in America than Ed Meese ever dreamed of. And I'm talking about normal people. The restaurant you mentioned is now very famous and even members of royalty have gone for their spanking!

*JOAM: What was your main lesson after "Nightbreed"?*

**CLIVE:** I learned the "path of least resistance," I discovered the politics of it. How easy it is to be bruised by the studio politics you are thrown into. I had never had that before.

Dario told me there is no way to avoid inner studio politics. There was nothing I could do about it. All I could do was experience it.

*JOAM: Experience it? Like, "What I did for the last year"?*

**CLIVE:** (laughter) Yeah, yeah. You got it. Exactly. Cronenberg is very

proud of the movie and is happy with the role. I called and talked to him. He stopped me. "What are you bitching about? That's happened to every single one of my movies!" It's true, you know. Think of the horrible distribution and ad campaign for "Videodrome." They had no idea what to do with the film. They even screwed "Dead Zone." You would think that Cronenberg/Steven King connection would force them to do better.

In Europe "Nightbreed" is getting great reviews. The video company, Media Home Entertainment, dumped the film release poster immediately and came up with a much better one. I get the feeling "Nightbreed" will crack America yet.

*JOAM: Why do you think people should subscribe to It's Only A Movie?*

**CLIVE:** There ain't enough weird around, I need more, and there is more information on weird culture on every page of It's Only A Movie than any publication I know of. (laughter)



Gruesome guitars explode from coffins and slither out of the darkness. Deadly drums pound your brain like a Texas sledgehammer. You will shake in terror as booming bass batters your being like a jolt from Dr. Frankenstein."

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## POISON IVY & LUX INTERIOR – THEIR WICKED, WICKED WAYS!

I tried to be good. Really I did. I was all set up to interview the Cramps when the phone started ringing. Rich Taylor from The Wig Hats invited me over to play Cramps records and drink Pearl beer, the cheapest beer in Texas. There I was faced with a choice. Be good, do the interview and then get drunk, or play records, get drunk and then do the interview. Boom Boom warned me. What can I say?

I've liked the Cramps for at least ten years. If you read the last issue of *IT'S ONLY A MOVIE*, you know I like the new release, "Stay Sick." I arrived at Rich's place with the sound of his stereo booming throughout the courtyard of his building complex. What followed was a three-hour retrospective of Cramps LPs, bootlegs, 45's and 12 inch material, along with the sound of bottle tops being popped.

Boom Boom knows I have a crush on Poison Ivy, but even she was stunned when, during the interview, I'd stare at Ivy with a smile on my face. Luckily, you, the reader, are spared most of that. Also, the slurred speech, repeated questions and any other meandering. Well you're spared at least from *some* of the meandering.

On stage the Cramps made an instant impression. Lux Interior, lead singer, was wearing high heels and covered the stage and audience easily. Ivy really provides most of the sound to Lux's stage show. The new girl, Candy Del Mar, has a set of hooters that could knock your eyes out. And I

kept ordering beers, drinking them to the drum beat of Nick Knox.

It was time to do the interview. I made my way through the Cabaret Metro to the dressing rooms, in the process I ran into Steve Levin who mentioned he'd like to be the back of Ivy's guitar. A sentiment I wholeheartedly echo.

IVY: OK, let's get this interview started.

*IOAM: Ivy, you've been the person actually producing the records under the Cramps name?*

IVY: Predominantly myself. It's been me on guitar when it said Brian Gregory.

*IOAM: I really enjoy your stuff. I glad you're letting people know what you do, that you're giving yourself credit. Say it loud and proud, I say. We have your*

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Above (left to right): Poison Ivy, Nick Knox, Candy Del Mar, Lux Interior  
Photo courtesy Enigma Records, c 1989 Dale Yudelman

records and European TV appearances. Even when you got away with saying fuck on TV.

IVY: German TV -- it's very different than TV here. The West Germans permit a lot.

LUX: You can do anything on European TV. In the videos shown on TV they have total nudity -- frontal nudity with pubic hair! I don't mean tasteful art movies, I'm talking about videos. Wild!

I saw quite a few videos over there that I've seen here and the European versions have all this extra footage that is wilder than you see here!

JOAM: *Films are tailored to markets, too. Dario Argento's Italian films are violent, but the Japanese versions are far more violent.*

IVY: You can see Madonna's nipples in her latest video and that has people complaining. Over there you see a lot more.

JOAM: *They showed the "Twin Peaks" ending last week in the middle of the series! In England, the show ended with the dream sequence involving a midget and the murdered girl. They decided Americans would have breakdowns unless it was presented as just a dream sequence. They think we're much dumber than we really are.*

LUX: The people releasing the shows, at least, think Americans are getting dumber. Then they end up contributing to the problem.

Trailers to movies used to tease you into seeing the film. Now, they have become short versions of the film. You see the trailer and you see all the best scenes from start to end! That ruins the movie for me.

Some "B" movies have even started showing the films action scenes over the opening credits. Some accounting firms want to make sure every dime spent on the film shows. It ruins the movie!

JOAM: *Have you seen "Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer"? A great movie.*

IVY: When we left LA it just opened, so we haven't seen it yet.

LUX: I keep hearing about this movie --

BOOM BOOM: *It was made right here in Chicago. John McNaughton is now working with William Burroughs on "The Last Words of Dutch Schultz."*

JOAM: *"Henry" has caused lots of controversy. Mike Weldon, I was told, informed the film's distributors that it was "too intense." We, on the other hand, are proclaiming it "the horror film of the decade."*

LUX & IVY: (laughter)

JOAM: *One of the top ten horror films I've ever seen. On the other hand, the movie "M" is on that list, so my definition of horror is very broad.*

LUX: Everywhere we go people talk about "Henry." But it's usually, "Have you seen or heard of it?" You guys sound like you've seen it many times.

JOAM: *MPV sent us a video years ago. You can never see "Henry" too many*



times. How many times can you look at a painting on your wall? Or any artwork?

LUX & IVY: (laughter)

JOAM: *I really love your video.*

LUX: Which one?

JOAM: *"Bikini Girls With Machine Guns." I was watching that and then you called within seconds after it ended. You sound shy.*

IVY: What do you mean?

JOAM: *I got the feeling after I talked to you that you're different off stage.*

IVY: No. Just anti-social.

(BOOM BOOM: *At this point, Mike started to lose it. He was still drinking beer and gazing at Poison Ivy like a fan boy. Men!*)

JOAM: *I loved the Soldier of Fortune video--*

IVY: *"Pretty Girls With Guns."*

JOAM: *Yes. So your takeoff was really great. It still has the shock image of a beautiful girl with a machine gun. Are programmers giving you problems with that?*

LUX: Everything we appreciate can be hard for programmers to get.

IVY: MTV cut out a scene in the video where I'm shooting the gun and you see a shot from my legs down of my bikini bottoms falling down!

LUX: They had to cut that out. Too intense.

JOAM: *Somebody protect me from my protectors.*

IVY: We shot a lot of footage, almost three hours worth, and a lot of that was depraved. But that didn't end up in the video. The shots in the video we didn't think would cause any problems. It's funny. The scene is funny. We didn't find out until later that MTV didn't think so. I understand what is controversial. We played by the rules. The

gun is clearly a toy gun. The video ended up working just like a horror movie in a way. People thought there was more happening than there really was. They saw something that wasn't there.

JOAM: *I loved the uncensored version I saw on a Concrete Music video.*

LUX: The director spent hours talking to us and I think that explains why it works --

JOAM: *He captured the music and the humor of The Cramps.*

IVY: If you have a slow motion control on your machine, watch the part when Lux's eyes are coming out at you. It's great in slow motion.

JOAM: *Actually, I've watched your parts in slow motion.*

(ROOM: *Quiet. Followed by laughter.*)

IVY (to Boom Boom): It looks totally different in slow motion. Lux's eyes start looking down and it becomes a horror movie! Scary! Terrifying.

LUX: In slow motion, it is a mini-horror movie. One eye comes down and then the other, in slow motion the mouth comes in and gets bigger than both eyes until the eyes wind up inside the mouth!

JOAM: *Luckily, MTV left that sequence in.*

LUX: --they open and then land on the head!

JOAM: *Is there going to be another CD release on Enigma?*

IVY: Yeah. Yeah. They want to do another one.

JOAM: *Who made the decision that it would only come out on CD and tape?*

IVY: Enigma is distributed by Capitol and all the majors are phasing out vinyl. It is available as an import on vinyl.

LUX: Artists like Madonna will come out on vinyl because they'll sell a ton of them. But it is now ridiculous to press vinyl compared to just a few years ago.

The imports are flooding the market over here. If Europe comes out with a 12 inch, it won't happen here. They won't bother to release a U.S. version because fans buy the import as soon as it's released.

Anybody who really wants a vinyl copy of "Stay Sick" knows where to find it.

*JOAM: I noticed a video camera shooting you on stage.*

LUX: I set up on stage with a tripod. We have a 3-D camera and a couple of camcorders.

IVY: The 3-D camera, you put a visor on and it has LED chips that make it work.

LUX: It's the best 3-D you've ever seen. You never see two images on the screen at once. Your eyes are watching it move 50 times a second. It is crystal clear without ghost images.

There is a group in California that releases movies they've made in 3-D.

*JOAM: The best 3-D I ever saw was "The House of Wax." There were really only a few shots of things coming out at you. The director, Andre DeToth, was blind in one eye and couldn't see 3-D. So, he primarily stressed depth in the movie. I will always remember Vincent Price running through the fog-filled streets with the street lamps lined up in a row.*

LUX: Mike, so many people have worked in 3-D and not understood the theory of it.

IVY: For "House of Wax," he sat down and calculated every scene of the movie. I doubt the majority of directors did that.

LUX: Hollywood has only tapped the surface of 3-D. 3-D only works from three feet to thirty feet at its best. So you have these movies that cut back and forth from close shots to long shots and when you do that kind of editing you just give everyone a headache.

Very few people have done it right. Alfred Hitchcock did it right. You have to see "Dial 'M' for Murder" in 3-D.

I saw "House of Wax" in the theater when it came out.

*JOAM: When you get the 3-D film done let us know. I'd love to have it available to our readers. I'll distribute it—we'll make a deal! I've got to get one of those 3-D cameras!*

*BOOM BOOM: We do parties, events and shows in town. Next month, a party with Clive Barker at the Palmer House downtown.*

*JOAM: Free booze—just what I need. It's paid for by Media Home Entertainment. My hobby's now a job. This cracks me up! I encourage other com-*



*panies to follow suit. A job based on trash culture...*

LUX: I really don't like to call it trash culture or camp, because, well, I guess you know as well, these films are often better than the mainstream films in almost any given decade in film history. Using a term like trash culture makes it more authentic. It gives the media a way to hold on to what you do. The first thing you realize is there are a lot of gems out there. It is not by any means all trash.

*JOAM: What have you been doing in Europe?*

LUX & IVY: Same as this.

IVY: We played for a couple months before we came to do this tour.

Spain was really cool. Lot's of TV. In Barcelona, at the stadium, half the crowd seemed to be on mescaline! We've never played to an audience like that one before. It's been ten years since Franco died and the country has been having a huge party.

LUX: It's like some parts of America were in 1967, only this is the whole country! Drugs are everywhere you go in the country. Out in the open. The

funny thing is we didn't see any out of control situations.

IVY: You're impressed with the fact that the people of Spain are in control and they enjoy it. They walk around appreciating every single day. You can sense they enjoy being in control of their lives and destiny. I'd never known that feeling until we went to Spain.

LUX: It's a fresh feeling. It's almost like the whole nation is in love. Beyond anything that flower power ever was.

We did a show in Valencia and I did a double-take when I got on stage. The audience was clearly tripping their brains out. They all had that look like they'd just come on to acid. It was just so weird.

IVY: And each town would have the strangest things. In Valencia, there was a gothic cathedral that had a big feature you could go look at — The Uncorrupted Arm of St. Vincent. Only the mummified arm. I have no idea what happened to the rest of him.

A 500-year old arm that is corrupting.

LUX: Pieces are falling off The Uncorrupted Arm.

IVY: People pass through and pray to this rotting arm.

LUX: On stage, I said "These are the Uncorrupted Feet of St. Vincent," and went into a little dance. The crowd went totally nuts. Some of them looked like they believed it.

*JOAM: Has it been frustrating to be the Cramps here in the U.S., without a label, and seeing bootlegs and T-shirts and videos out on you?*

LUX: There are other things more frustrating than that. We know we've come up with ideas that others have copied. Songs we've done live which pop up on other records. There have been so many fucking things we've done and our version will be copied by another band before anyone has a chance to hear ours. Sometimes they get them off bootlegs. It is great to finally have a record company here so we can get our music distributed everywhere. Now we feel like we can do things that will be seen and heard here.

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**Photos on this page and *others*:** Lux and Ivy performing at Chicago's Cabaret Metro during their "Stay Sick" tour. Copyright 1990 Pat Schenning.



The Cramps (left to right): Nick Knox, Candy Del Mar, Poison Ivy, Lux Interior  
Photo courtesy Enigma Records, c 1989 Dale Yudelman

IVY: Mike, believe it or not, there are several videos that have already tried to copy the trick with Lux's eyes in the "Bikini Girls With Machine Guns" video only they haven't got it right yet. We did ours through in-camera over exposures. It was all in-camera on film. They use mattes and spotlights and try to get the look, but haven't. The spinning shot when the hand is playing is already being appropriated. That is how fast the majors absorb what you do.

LUX: So then you get to see a hand in heavy rotation on MTV copying a technique used in ours. That makes me mad.

IVY: Video is faster than records. Somebody can have a video out the next week using your idea. And these aren't bootlegs.

*IOAM: I've been able to follow your career because of the bootlegged foreign releases.*

*BOOM BOOM: Judging by the size of tonight's crowd, so has everyone else.*

LUX: What bothers me about the bootlegs is that I've heard about two out of the 60 that are out that have good sound. I'm serious. I have great stereo versions of the muffled noise I hear on these bootlegs, Mike. Is it

really a big layout of money to have a good microphone?

They usually have a shitty tape recorder in their back pocket at the back of the hall and that comes out as a record. Our fans always have to have it. I know what it's like. There were hands I had to have everything ever done on them. They shouldn't have to feel they want stuff that is crummy. Look at it this way, if people didn't buy crummy sounding boots, I guarantee they would get better recorders and microphones. They take advantage of the fan because the fan will buy anything.

I doubt if anyone is getting rich off those things. The money doesn't bother me as much as the sound. They don't even try.

*BOOM BOOM: Do you have a script for a 3-D Cramps movie?*

IVY: No, we're just shooting with it.

LUX: I'd love to be in a movie. For the Cramps to be in a film...that's something I'd like us to do. Without a record company it's been hard to get attention.

The last record company never happened. I don't think they ever had any idea how to promote us.

IVY: I don't think Enigma would ever even think of asking us to change

what we do to fit in more with other acts on the label. I don't think they would even consider it.

LUX: IRS was always "We should change this" or "change that."

*IOAM: How did you like the live album, "ROCKIN AND REELIN" IN AUCKLAND, and will it be released here?*

LUX: There's the man who did the sound on that, Greg Heiter.

*IOAM: Hi!*

GREG: Howdy.

IVY: That was the last gig of a 100-day tour that ended in New Zealand.

LUX: I like that album a lot but I don't know if it will ever get released here. It was a special night for us because we were done.

GREG: It was a great show.

*IOAM: "A Date With Elvis" seemed to be a major step.*

LUX: It was a step in the right direction. But, Michael, the actual making of it --

IVY: We fired the bass player. We fired the studio engineer.

LUX: We had problems on all of our albums until "Stay Sick." We went in and did the music. Nobody got fired, nobody caused trouble, nobody tried to change our sound.

*IOAM: "Stay Sick" was an expression of Ohio horror host Ghoulardi. I've only seen clips of Ghoulardi's work. Bestoink Dooley was the Atlanta horror host I grew up with.*

LUX: Oh yeah! He did "Night on Blood Mountain"!

IVY: Oh my lord! I didn't know he was a horror host when I saw that movie!

*IOAM: I met Bestoink Dooley, whose real name was George Ellis, when he opened up a movie theater--The Festival Cinema, which specialized in underground movies. As a teenager I saw Andy Warhol and Kenneth Anger movies in a theater, munching on popcorn. So, I thought to myself, when I come to Chicago there would probably be several theaters booking the same films. Boy was I wrong! Bestoink Dooley ran this great underground movie theater.*

IVY: I didn't know he had a life outside of "Night on Blood Mountain."

*IOAM: There were two girls that worked there, Carol and Linda. Through Carol, I met Russ Meyer. I dated the two of them a few times. I really had a crush on Linda. Carol appeared in a Russ Meyer film, Linda was very kind to a precocious 13-year old to even agree to spend any time with me. I was always confident after that.*

*Ellis also appeared at the end of a "Gunsmoke" episode. On the night of his show, he would invade the local newscast. The weatherman didn't like it so Ellis would go out of his way to invade his report. Finally, the weatherman started waiting around after the news and started invading Ellis' horror show. He did a lot of funny bits. The first Vietnam jokes I saw on TV were on his show. So I grew up on Bestiok Dooley.*

*Hey, are you bleeding, Lux? (It's at this point I realize that Lux is still wearing his heels and his ankle is bleeding.)*

*IVY: It must be his recurring stigmata.*

*IOAM: I really enjoy your work. I love your music. Even before I knew your other roles in the band, I really loved the sound you bring to the band. I just didn't realize all the other things you do, like managing for the Cramps.*



**LUX:** We haven't had a lot of luck with past managers and labels. It's been the fans, the people that come to see us, who have kept us going.

**IVY:** I was the secret bass player. Producer. I don't care if people know any more.

**LUX:** What happens at meetings of the Women's Auxiliary of the film society?

***IOAM:** They mainly show films where men are abused and used—the victims!*

**LUX:** Those are great movies.

**BOOM BOOM:** We recently did a video called "Rampaging Women" with

**Cynthia Plastercaster.** It also has Penn and Teller. We'll send you a copy. We show some of Cynthia's plastercast collection, too. *Penn and Teller* are the token men. It's the video version of *It's Only A Movie*.

**LUX:** I'd like to put out a book of cheesecake photos of Ivy. I've got hundreds of them. I've been taking pictures of her for years.

**BOOM BOOM:** Have you seen the newest *Betty Page 3-D* book?

**IVY:** I saw the first one.

**BOOM BOOM:** This one is all bondage!

**IOAM:** Get to a comic book store quick and grab it.

**LUX:** There are bondage stores over in Europe that you just cannot believe.

***IOAM:** —I just tell Pam to put those safety pins away.*

**LUX:** What makes you think you have any choice?

**IVY:** Don't be a chicken.

*With that, we broke up. We walked out with them, Lux still wearing the high-heeled shoes, no doubt thinking about those cheesecake photos of Ivy. It had been a great night and I still had a beer at home in the refrigerator.*



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# JOE BOB GOES TO THE DRIVE-IN

By Joe Bob Briggs  
Drive-In Movie Critic  
of Grapevine, Texas



I guess you've heard about the disaster at this year's Drive-In Academy Awards ceremony. I've never been so humiliated since...well...since last year's Drive-In Academy Awards.

The Hubbies, as they're known to drive-in fans on three continents, were announced *as usual*, to be held at Paul's Lamplighter Lounge in Kokomo, Indiana. The entertainment, *as usual*, was announced as Sherry "The Snake Woman" Wilcox, also known as The Walking United Way Agency. I've announced the same location, and the same entertainment, for four straight years, and, *as usual*, nobody ever shows up to accept their award. So normally I give out the awards whenever and wherever I feel like it, sometimes on KGO-TV in San Francisco, sometimes on The Movie Channel, sometimes on the radio. One year we had a ceremony at the Gemini Drive-In in Dallas. And, of course, Arnold Schwarzenegger is the only person ever to actually show up to receive his award. Unfortunately, Arnold didn't understand what the award was for.

So this year was going along, *as usual*, with interest in the Hubbies at room-temperature pitch. But, the week before the Oscars, I went on "The Tonight Show" and mentioned, casually, that the Hubbies would be at Paul's Lamplighter Lounge in Kokomo, Indiana. Jay Leno didn't seem exactly impressed. And then, on

the Saturday night before the Oscars, Connie Chung *announced in prime time* that the Hubbies would be the same night as the Oscars, at Paul's Lamplighter Lounge in Kokomo, Indiana.

Evidently Connie has a very literal understanding of things.

So, on the morning of the Oscars, I was in Phoenix, basking like a sand lizard at the big hoo-haw cable TV sales meeting, and I started getting bombarded with messages.

"The Kokomo paper is on the phone."

"People in Indianapolis wanna drive up for the awards -- do you have directions?"

"The radio station at Indiana University wants to cover the awards."

"There's a guy at the Lamplighter Shop in Kokomo who's calling up to complain." (It turned out to be a light fixture store.)

"The Kokomo paper is on the phone again. They're demanding a statement."

"This woman called to say there is no place in Kokomo called Paul's Lamplighter Lounge."

"The Kokomo paper wants more than a statement. They want an interview."

"Some guy just called to tell you that Paul's Lamplighter Lounge closed about four years ago."

"The paper wants to know if you were so irresponsible as to make up the name of a non-existent bar."

"There's a Kokomo bar owner called who says you can use his place for the awards if you want to."

"You have about thirty faxes. Do you want me to read them to you? Everybody wants to know where the awards show is."

"The Kokomo paper says they really hope you *will* come and do the awards ceremony in Kokomo, even if it's not tonight."

"The guy at the Lamplighter Shop is pretty steamed."

"Some guy in Houston is listed in the phone book as J.B. Briggs. He's pretty steamed, too."

Up till now, I have maintained silence on this matter, issuing only a two paragraph statement to the fine investigative journalists at The Kokomo Tribune, who were the first to verify that Paul's Lamplighter Lounge does not, in fact, exist. However, I wish to challenge the recent attacks on my character with the following additional statement.

At the time I announced the location for the Drive-In Academy Awards, I had no knowledge that Paul's Lamplighter Lounge did not exist. In fact, since this raft of publicity, we have had two independent witnesses, residents of Kokomo, state that "there was a place called Paul's Lamplighter Lounge, but it closed four years ago."

Obviously I'm shocked. I feel partly responsible. If I had thought to book the room earlier, perhaps Paul's could have been saved.

As to the Kokomo managing editor's opinion that I engaged in "irresponsible journalism," I wish to point out that it was Connie Chung, who had far more resources than I had, who had, in fact, an entire network news team at her disposal, who had a whole staff of producers working directly for her, who should have verified the existence of Paul's Lamplighter Lounge. Obviously, CBS News, which prides itself on being the world's greatest newsgathering force, would never have reported such a thing had it not been for the prior existence of Paul's Lamplighter. No doubt Connie herself had cocktails there.

And, finally, there was a question as to whether this invalidated this year's Hubbies, or otherwise affected their authenticity. *On the contrary*. With the great outpouring of support for the Hubbies in Kokomo, measures are being taken now by the Drive-In Academy to hold the ceremony there every year.

I've booked the room already. Next year's awards will be held at the Rib Shack on Federal Highway 31.

But now, the long-awaited, long-delayed results of the 1989 Drive-In Academy Awards:

**BEST WRITER** -- Daniel Waters, "Heathers," for making poetry out of words like "phlegm glob."

**BEST DIRECTOR** -- Joseph Zito, "Red Scorpion."

**BEST BAD GUY** -- Wings Hauser, "L.A. Bounty," as the sleazeball who forces a guy to get inside a wooden

crate, says "Hard to breathe?" and shoots the crate full of holes.

**BEST DIALOGUE** -- Christian Slater, "Heathers": "Maybe I am killing everyone in the school, but nobody loves me."

**BEST GROSSOUT SCENE** (tie) -- Charles Bronson forcing a guy to eat a Rolex in "Kinjite."

And...

Hulk Hogan wearing peach panties in "No Holds Barred."

**BEST ACTOR** -- Eric Stoltz, the half-human half-insect mutant man-child in "The Fly II."

**BEST ACTRESS** -- Cheryl Lawson, "The Dead Pit," as the gal who has her memory cut out with a surgical icepick, one of the finest screamers in movie history.

**BREAST ACTRESS** -- Brigitte Nielsen, "Bye Bye Baby," who wears a white mini-dress slit up to here, aerobic leotards, bikinis, and nothing at all, creating a new thunder-thighed fashion statement called Scandinavian Buffalo.

And finally -- could we have a drum-roll please? --

**BEST FLICK** -- "Mutant on the Bounty," the story of a horribly mutilated saxophone player with a face that looks like a can of Raviolios who's rescued by a Gilligan's Island spaceship full of singles-bar rejects.

Remember: Next year in Kokomo.

**W**hen I travel around the country being obnoxious, sometimes people come up to me and they say, "Joe Bob, we used to just love your newspaper column till they stopped putting it in the newspaper."

And it's true. I've been kicked out of some of the finest newspapers in America. And so people always want to know, "What is it you get kicked out for, Joe Bob?"

And usually the answer is either sex or religion. You can't write about sex or religion or else the editor's hiney pucks up and his underwear rides up in his crack. But what are the two things people wanna talk about? They either wanna tell you what plastic love-



rock they're worshipping, or else how they dressed up like a giraffe in bed last night.

But then there's other stuff you can get kicked out for, like an ethnic joke. But it depends on what ethnic group you're joking about. Editors think a lot of groups are funny -- Iranians; the French, also known as the Froggies; Japaneenes; Turks; Polish people, except not in Chicago. And then some groups you're supposed to never joke about or else they'll kick your rear end from here to Nome, Alaska -- blacks; gays, except in San Francisco, where the gays have a sense of humor; Indians, in some places. And so, of course, we all know what this means. If the editor thinks you can't make jokes about blacks, gays or Indians, it's because he thinks they're scum. Otherwise he'd treat em like everybody else.

So anyhow, the point I'm making is that now these Newspaper Nazis have taken the ultimate step: they censored "Beetle Bailey"!

Do you believe this?

Mort Walker, the guy who'd been writing "Beetle Bailey" for 297 years, drew a comic strip where the general asks the troops to present their "gums" but he writes "buns" instead and so they all turn around and drop their



Right: Hottie nominees Winona Ryder, Christian Slater in "Heathers," the first movie that had something good to say about teenage suicide. Above left: Morgan Fairchild, picking out the dress she'll wear to the Oscars, in "Phantom of the Mail."

pants. And so Mort's syndicate refuses to send the comic strip out cause they think America would be infuriated by a bunch of droopy cartoon hineys. They said, "There are too many kids reading this feature."

Have these people ever met a six-year-old? All you have to say to a six-year-old is the word "hiney," or tell him about someone who had to show his hiney, and the kid can't stop laughing for 15 minutes. To a six-year-old, seeing bare rear ends in "Beetle Bailey" would be the funniest joke since Sammy Davis kissed Archie Bunker on "All in the Family." We're talking Super Bowl of Kiddie Comedy here.

In other words, these turkeys are lying again, aren't they?

Why do they really think the "Beetle Bailey" strip is disgusting?

Because they've been thinking too much about bare hineys.

That's all I'm gonna say, cause I don't wanna get kicked out again.

But speaking of think impressionable young children shouldn't see, Morgan Fairchild is back at the drive-in! She's pouty, she's sequined, she's wearing too much makeup! You know what I'm talking about by now. It's "Phantom of the Mall," featuring the big screen's Numero Uno Lipstick Lizard as the evil mayor who's killing people all over the lot so that someday she can be a profit partner in a shopping-mall development deal. (California screenwriter.)

Unfortunately for Morgan, another crazed killer, half-Freddy Krueger, half-high-school-jock-in-a-leather-jacket, is roaming through the mall's air conditioning vents, breathing heavily through a mask he carved off a Sears mannequin, and polishing the automatic cross-hew he lifted from Oshman's Sporting Goods. His name is Eric, and his face was horribly mutilated in a fire set by an arsonist that killed both his parents. It was during his senior year, too, and so he's really hummed out.

Fortunately for us, Morgan Fairchild is one of those California mayors who spends every waking moment walking around the mall, so in the movie's most exciting moment, the gruesome geek phantom gets to throw her wiggling, sequined, evening-dressed, high-heeled body through a glass window and then watch her fall three stories



Belial, the star of "Basket Case 2," learns that he's been approved for a handicapped parking sticker.

into the mall atrium, where she is impaled on an ice sculpture. There are some movies worth watching for just one scene.

Eight breasts. Eleven dead bodies. One motor vehicle chase, with three crashes, one explosion. Eye-popping electric-fan brain-slicing. Dempster Dumpster body-burning. Boyfriend barbecue. Body parts in the ice cream bowl. Cohra-in-the-commode attack. One guy gets escalated to death. Face-eating rats. Trash-compactor head-chopping. Gratuitous ninja attack in the mall parking lot. Kung Fu. Crossbow Fu. Forklift Fu. Flamethrower Fu. Mail Fu. Drive-In Academy Award nominations for Kari Whitman, as the screamer; Derek Rydall, as the creep in the air-conditioning vents; and Morgan Fairchild, for her superb use of eyeliner.

Three stars.

Joe Bob says check it out.

**T**he drive-in eighties began with the classic "Basket Case," the story of a horribly deformed, twisted, mutilated Siamese twin who lives in a picnic basket and is very angry about it. It

summed up the Nixon years for me and many others like me.

And now we begin the nineties with "Basket Case 2." Belial has matured. He's learned to act out his aggression in safer ways. He identifies the people whose faces need to be eaten before he starts munching. And he's falling in love. It's a kinder, gentler horribly mutilated Siamese twin who lives in a picnic basket.

Why did the sequel take nine years to make?

Because it's perfect.

America is a different place. Belial no longer lives in a loft overlooking Times Square. He lives in the attic of a mansion on Staten Island. And he has friends. Thanks to a fruitcake lady psychiatrist, he's the head of the world's most militant minority group. They all have heads like giant squashed garden vegetables, and they spend most of their spare time in Ugly Therapy with the lady doctor. But they have one thing in common: They hate "normal" people. And when a smart-mouth himbo reporter for a sleazoid magazine shows up to write stories about the "freak house," they all get together for a little motivational therapy, followed by some serious molar-sharpening.

The only thing that's just a little bit shocking about Part Two is that the Vomit Meter rating is way down -- no closeup surgery, no slow-motion face-chomping, and a whole lot less blood. Reason: the Jack Valenti MPAA Censorship Board boys have been slashing the slime all year long, slapping "X" ratings on perfectly innocent gore movies, and so nobody's taking any chances with those Nazis.

Even though it's only been nine years, it seems like only yesterday that we had the world drive-in premiere of "Basket Case" at the Highway 183 Drive-In in Irving, Texas, at 2 in the morning. About 300 cars showed up for it, and the world was changed forever. "Basket Case" went on to sweep the Drive-In Academy Awards that year and to become the most famous cult movies of the decade. People still write to me from Austria, Sweden, Australia, and some countries where the movie has been banned, asking for information on "Basket Case." The only cult movie more famous is "The Texas Chainsaw

Massacre," and that's probably only because it's been around longer.

And now they've made a better one. It picks up exactly where the first one left off, with Duane splattered all over the pavement of Times Square. He's a mess, but he's not dead. Duane and his twin brother Belial, the twisted mass of grotesque muscle with an arm coming out of the side of his face, get side-by-side intensive-care beds, and all it takes is a couple of security-guard meals and -- whammo! -- they're out on the street, ready to be taken into the care of...Annie Ross! The jazz singer and classical actress! She's working a horror film! And she's great.

She takes the Freak Twins to live in her mansion on Staten Island and starts in on their psychotherapy. She takes Belial out of his basket, sets his slimy little intestine body on the couch, and says, "I think it's time we really confronted your feelings about your separation from Duane." Belial grunts and whimpers. "To you it was more than losing a brother. You also lost a piece of yourself." And when they really get to the crux of Belial's problem,

she says, "I understand your pain, Belial, but ripping the faces off people may not be in your best interests."

Meanwhile, there's a grotesquely deformed female Belial upstairs in Granny's Freak Attic, and Belial is spending a lot of time parking his muscle mass in front of Lady Belial's pet bed. Duane thinks that, if Belial actually falls in love with another mutant monster, then Duane will be free for the first time. And he has his eye on...Heather Rattray! The girl from "Mountain Family Robinson" and "Wilderness Family"! The most obnoxious simpering white-bread girl-next-door in America! He wants to do with her what no man has done before. Fat chance.

I don't wanna say anything else, cause it's one of those movies where anything can happen at any moment, and nothing happens where it's supposed to. Another masterpiece.

Two breasts. Six dead bodies. Strangling. Face-eating. Monster sex. Closeup do-it-yourself surgery. Kung Fu. Baseball bat Fu. Freak show Fu. Drive-In Academy Award nomina-

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tions for Jason Byers, as the editor of Judge and Jury, "America's Gravest Newspaper," the same actor who starred in the 1959 drive-in classic "The Brain That Wouldn't Die"; Heather Rattray, as Susan, for saying "We're all of the same flesh, Duane"; Kevin van Hentenryck, as Duane, for making the second movie even after he died in the first one, for having even a more disgusting scar on the side of his body where Belial was cut off, and for slowly going crazy as he says "I just wanted people to think I was *normal*"; Kathryn Meisle, as the tabloid reporter, for saying "This story is worth more than Lou could ever pay! We're talking People Magazine!"; Annie Ross, as Granary Ruth, for gathering her freakish "children" around her and saying "The wolves are once again at our door! Our rights are being invaded by sideshow mentality!" and then leading them into battle; Ted Sorel, as Phil the detective, for saying "You're wrapped in your brother's shadow!" right before Belial eats his face off; and Frank Henenlotter, the director, for making the ultimate handicapped-rights film.

Four stars. The standard for the nineties.

Joe Bob says check it out.

**B**efore I tell you about the best black drive-in flick of the year, you might need a little historical background, so here is the complete Joe Bob Briggs Guide to the History of Blaxploitation:

1971: Talkin' about "Shaft" is where it all begins, with Richard Roundtree in his slick brown leather coat, sleeping with ever woman in New York, throwing Mafia guys through plate-glass windows, and shooting it out with Harlem gangsta. Remember this line? "I only got two problems, baby. I was born black and I was born poor." And then he throws her out of his apartment because he's sick of being a sex machine. "Shaft" is a great movie. The only reason people don't remember it's a great movie is that they made "Shaft's Big Score" (1972), "Shaft in Africa" (1973), and the "Shaft CBS Tuesday Night Movie," which petered out in 1974.

1973: "Super Fly" was the first real honky-hater -- Ron O'Neal as a coke-snortin drug dealer who runs a 50-man



Kadeem Hardison does battle with the Devil Woman in "Def By Temptation."

operation pushing hard stuff to Whitey. Shaft didn't like anybody, white or black, and so he never became a role model for blaxploitation stars, but Super Fly had the platform shoes, the threads and the essential double-girlfriend lifestyle (one black girl, one white girl). Even though the sequel, "Super Fly T.N.T." (1973), was a huge bomb, Ron O'Neal's portrayal of Youngblood Priest was the beginning of the hard-core, bitter, let's-stick-it-to-em black hero.

Now we're rolling. In a three-year period, there were better than 40 blaxploitation flicks, but there weren't that many good ones. My favorites:

"Blacula" (1972): William Marshall as the most bizarre vampire in history fits in perfectly at El Lay parties, but Vonetta McGee as his beautiful blood-thirsty lover steals the movie. This movie started an incredible run of black horror flicks, beginning with the sequel, "Scream, Blacula, Scream" (1973), then "Blackenstein," "Ganja and Hess," "Abby," "Sugar Hill" and "Dr. Black, Mr. Hyde."

"Slaughter" (1972): Jim Brown's blaxploitation debut pits the blacks against the Eyetalians, with Jimbo as an ex-Green Beret who's avenging the murder of his gangster dad. Mostly an excuse for Jim to strut around kicking white guys in the teeth whenever they throw racial slurs his way.

"Cleopatra Jones" (1973): Tamara Dobson was the six-foot-two machine-

gun toting Kung Fu Mama working narcotics assignments for the CIA. (Every great blaxploitation movie has some weird new secret branch of the CIA that nobody's ever heard of before.) But what really makes this movie great is one of the greatest villains of all time -- Shelley Winters as "Mommy," the leather-clad lesbian heroin dealer, also known as "super honky." Cleopatra drives a black Corvette, karate-chops gangsters from the opium fields of Turkey to the slums of Watts, and talks like this: "Your head and your body is going to need separate maintenance." The sequel was "Cleopatra Jones and the Casino of Gold" (1975).

"Five on the Black Hand Side" (1973): The first blaxploitation parody film. The poster said "You've been coifed, blacurated, superfluied! You've been macked, hammered, slaughtered and shafted!" This very funny film was followed by an even funnier one sixteen years later, Keenan Ivory Wayans' "I'm Gonna Git You, Sucka!" Both movies used many familiar black action stars.

"The Mack" (1973): Max Julien as the man whose ambition in life is to be the greatest pimp in the history of the world, because "Being rich and black means something." Features actual footage of the Players Ball, the annual gathering of pimps in Oakland. Written by Robert J. Poole, who served five years in prison for twelve years of pimping.

"Black Belt Jones" (1974): After Bruce Lee's brain exploded, his producers tried to make a star out of Jim Kelly, who was introduced in Bruce Lee's greatest film, "Enter the Dragon." The kung fu was pretty decent, but Kelly disappeared anyway.

And then, from there on out, the pickings got kinda slim:

"Mister Mean" (1977): One of the best action flicks by the man who has produced, directed and starred in more blaxploitation films than anybody else -- Fred Williamson.

"Penitentiary" (1979): Leon Isaac Kennedy stars in a blaxploitation "Rocky"-rip-off prison flick about "Too Sweet" Gordone, the guy who gets put in prison because he's black, abused in prison because he's black, and forced to fight in prison because he's black, but eventually gets out because he can box real well. The sequels

are actually better flicks: "Penitentiary II" (1982) and "Penitentiary III" (1987).

"The Last Dragon" (1985): Berry Gordy, the founder of Motown Records, made this flick about a teenager called "Bruce Leroy" because he wants to be a kung fu star. Featuring some great Vanity songs and Julius J. Carry III's historic performance as Sho Nuff, the Sbogun of Harlem.

"Action Jackson" (1988): Carl Weathers backflips over a car and rescues Vanity from her beroin babit in the best blaxploitation flick of the eighties.

And now, in the nineties, we've got the first all-black contemporary horror action kung fu devil-sex comedy, "Def By Temptation," the story of a kinky freakazoid barfly woman with long gold fingernails who's possessed by the devil. She hangs out at the bars, leads men home by the nose, and then sexes em to death. It's not clear just exactly how she sexes em to death, except that at some point during the sex they start screaming and blood starts spouting out of their faces.

The Devil Woman's ultimate target in Joel, an innocent mumbbling choirboy from North Carolina who lives with his Grandma but comes to New York City for a couple of weeks to "take a break" before he becomes a full-time preacher. Joel is putty in her special-effects canopy bed...until his friend Kadeem Hardison from the Cosby Show rides to the rescue, spiking the Devil Woman's drink with Holy Water and then hooking up with a secret branch of the CIA dedicated to investigating devil-sex murders.

Sure, we've seen it before, but it's the way they do it.

No breasts. (Never are in blaxploitation flicks.) Nine dead bodies. Drunk mutilated zombies. Flesh-eating, vomiting TV set. Close-up wrist cracking. Bloody-shower sex. Dagger-sex. Huge-boils-on-the-head sex. Exploding demon. One motor vehicle chase, with crash and burn. Kung Fu. Sex Fu. Drive-In Academy Award nominations for John Canada Terrell, as the borny bartender, for saying "Hey, baby, we had a good time -- you can get an abortion now"; Cynthia Bond, as the Devil Woman, for putting on her Christian Dior stockings with no hands, and for saying "Honey, I've given you something there's no cure

for"; Bill Nunn, as the CIA devil-sex agent, for trying to pick up girls by telling em he's a "kung fu surgeon"; Melba Moore, as the fortune teller who's trying to figure out what the Devil Woman is up to, for saying "This thing is the very nature of ugliness"; and James Bond III, the writer, director, and star, for saying "New York is wild -- nothing seems normal -- everything seems out of place" while he's driving through the Holland Tunnel. Jimbo is just 23 years old -- obviously a drive-in superstar of the future.

Three and a half stars. Joe Bob says check it out.

**F**irst there was "Frankenstein." Then there was "Bride of Frankenstein." Then there was "Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein."

Now, the movie that will still be grossing us out twenty years from now -- no, I'll go farther than that, this is a movie more disgusting than "Let Me Die a Woman," the 1978 classic showing actual surgical footage of a man being turned into a woman. You've heard about it. It's here. A perfect 100 on the Vomit Meter.

I'm talking about "Frankenhooker."

It's not that we haven't seen the story before. Or stories. It's a combination of every brain-research, mad-scientist, and psycho movie of the past 30 years. It even reminds you of Ed Gein, the famous Plainfield, Wisconsin bandyman and psycho who collected body parts, dressed them like deers, and danced around in the moonlight with their skin strapped to his body. "Fun Ed," as we like to call him around the trailer house, was the inspiration for "Psycho" and, more important, "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre."

But this is not just another exploding-head flick. This is a romantic comedy. I'm not kidding. It's a black comedy, but it's so far beyond black that it's more like a black-hole comedy. It's a movie that will probly get laughs on Friday nights at the Nevada State Institute for the Criminally Insane. And, as you all know, that's the highest compliment I ever give.

Let me put it this way. When they sent the movie over to the MP double-A ratings board in El Lay to have it screened, the head honcho called up the distribution company and said,

"I'm gonna do you guys a favor. I'm gonna rewind this film and send it back to your office and return your check for the screening fee, and then we're both going to act like it never happened. Because we don't have a 'S' rating over here."

The distribution executive said, "S rating? You mean for Sexy?"

"Not for 'S---'!"

So the movie company sent it over to the MP double-A appeals board instead. Those are guys who meet in New York and frequently overturn decisions of the El Lay board. But the last I heard, they still didn't have any rating on the movie.

The company is considering an ad campaign that says "Frankenhooker! First movie in history to be rated S!"

Here's the plot: Little Jeffrey lives in the New Jersey suburbs with his mother, the blimpola Louis Lasser. Usually Jeffrey is happy just tinkering around with live brains in petrie dishes, trying to make them grow eyes and live in fish tanks. But then one day Jeffrey's fiance gets Cuismarted by a runaway lawnmower, and the only thing Jeffrey can salvage is her head. That's okay, though, because he has a plan -- the same plan formulated by Fuad Ramses, the maniac Egyptian caterer in "Blood Feast." Jeffrey will

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Patty Mullen as "Frankenhooker" — when she says "Wanna date?" you better say yes.

collect body parts until he has a complete Elizabeth again.

Where to find his body parts? Forty-Second Street — where else?

How to hook his hookers? With crack — what else?

But this is no ordinary crack. This is New Jersey mad-scientist electrically-charged Super Crack. It has only one bad side effect. When you take it, your whole body explodes into twenty or thirty pieces.

"After all, I'm not killing anybody," mumbles Jeffrey as he mixes his solution. "It's the crack that's goana kill em. If they don't wanna do it, they can just say no."

The scene where Jeffrey pays for nine hookers at once, takes em to a dingy motel room, and measures their equipment turns out to be ... well ... explosive.

I've never seen anything like it.

And it gets worse.

Let's take a look at these totals: Twenty-seven breasts. (Thirty-five if

you count the ones that are ... never mind.) Fourteen dead bodies. Exploding heads. Brain in a jar. Brain in a fish tank. Drill-through-the-head psycho-therapy. Head slicing. Girlfriend-eating lawnmower. Bunion filing. Candlelight dinner with a severed head (Beaujolais poured through her mouth). Spewing body parts. Exploding hookers. Cameo appearance by John Zacherle, the creepy late-night movie host of the fifties and sixties, the man who started it all. Excellent Morton Downey impersonation by Tom Hair. Heads roll. Arms roll. Legs roll. Everything rolls. Gratuitous Swede. Drive-In Academy Award nominations for James Lorinz, as Jeffrey, for saying "Medical schools upset me, mother -- I'm anti-social -- I'm becoming dangerously immoral" and for apologizing to the splattered corpses; Joseph Gonzalez, as Zorro, the pimp, for setting a world neck-chain record and saying "My woman just blew up on me"; Patty Mullen, as former Penthouse Pet of the Year, as

"Frankenhooker," for staggering down 42nd Street with suture marks all over her body and giving new meaning to the phrase "Wanna date?"; and, of course, producer Edgar Ilevins and director Frank Henenlotter, the geniuses who created "Basket Case 1 and 2," "Brain Damage," and have now established an even lower standard in horrible taste. My kind of guys.

Four stars. Best of '90. Joe Bob says check it out.

To discuss the meaning of life with Joe Bob, or to get free junk and his world famous newsletter (a one-year subscription is \$6), write Joe Bob Briggs, P.O. Box 2002, Dallas, Texas 75221. Joe Bob's Fax Line is always open: 214/368-2310.

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Dear Joe Bob:

After reading your column, I was inspired to go to a drive-in on South High Street.

Now I haven't been to a drive-in since I was eight or nine, but I thought my two young sons should experience one at least once.

There was a long line to get in. I've already forgotten what was playing, but the most amazing thing occurred as each car passed the ticket window. You may or may not believe this, but as each car passed, all IQ's in the vehicle dropped 20 points, all shoes fell off, and all women of any age immediately became pregnant. I've never seen such a collection of Southern in-breds, *in-breds* being a family where the father, brother, uncle and grandfather are all the same person.

In light of the fact that we all know the in-breds don't do anything but reproduce at drive-ins, are drive-ins a hazard to society?

Sign me, Curious in Columbus, Columbus, O.

Dear Curious:

I don't know, lemme ask my cousin .. Hey, Uncle Withrow, are drive-ins dangerous to society?

Dear Joe Bob,

I have seen several movies in my life. I have always seen men that look like contestants for Mister Universe in them. Why haven't I seen any contestants for Ms. Universe in the movies? If there are, why haven't I seen the movie? Can you send me some movie titles with Ms. Universe contestants in the movie?

Sincerely yours, Andy  
Armonia, Calif.

Dear Andy:

You obviously never saw "Pumping Iron II: The Women." They had one gal from Australia in that sucker

with muscles growing on the outside of her skin. Three East German female shotputters took one look at her and o.d.ed on steroids.

Dear Mr. Briggs,

I've just been recruited to the North Texas operative of the Names Project, a new nationwide network dedicated

**Communist Alert! The Texan Drive-In in Midland, Tex., has been closed and turned into ... a billboard for Japanese cars. Jeff Brookings is a humiliated Midland native who reminds us that, without eternal vigilance, it can happen here.**

to the enjoyment of unusual names of real folks.

Recent discoveries include:

Fird H. Sink, Hiawatha Peterkin, Phuoc Huu Tucker, Pleasure Banks, Barry Hiney, Dowell Smallwood, Lloyd Asparagus Jr., Charles Dookie, Wen I. Chiu, Charade Humdy, Leslie Ann Mother, Merle Rips, Buff Shurr, Jinx Weekley

I wanted you to be the first to know of this valuable resource.

Best regards, Jim Fox  
Dallas

Dear Jim:

Since we're living in the state where Governor James Hogg named his daughter "Ima," you've got a very high standard

to measure up to. So far, "Barry Hiney" qualifies for the Name Hall of Fame.

Dear Joe Bob:

Was there ever a funeral for the pig John Travolta killed in "Carrie"?

Ed Wysocki  
Hayward, Calif.

Dear Ed:

Most of us remember that pig as the pig that launched John Travolta's career, so there is a National Massacred Pork Monument on the actual slaughter site, with a pillar that reads "Lest we make the same mistake again."

Yo Joe Bob!

We'll put you on our Trash Culture newsletter, "JFO Analis."

Our motto: "If you can't be a good example, then you'll just have to be a horrible warning."

Y'all hang, Carroll Varner  
Illinois State University Normal, Ill.

Dear Carroll:

My motto: "Don't eat anything with an IQ higher than your own."

This, of course, rules out mahi mahi for most people.

In some parts of Illinois, it rules out chicken.

Hey Joe Bob!

As a *real* ordained, official, no kidding, seminary-educated, Southern Baptist (Baptist—you know) minister, I think you're OK. Send some free junk. My apartment just cries for Atmosphere.

Please don't print my name. I do want a church some day.

Thanx, (Name Withheld)  
Kansas City

Dear Reverend:  
Glad to see my fellow Baptists still follow all the old traditions, like hiding all the Budweiser on Thursday night in case the preacher comes by. It's great to know now that the preacher is hiding *his*, too.

Hey Joe Bob,  
I live in a comic strip (my own comic, granted) and I'm getting pretty damn tired of existing on my own platform of existential surrealism with nothing but trans-dimensional coagulations of hideously evil cosmic forces for entertainment at night after coming home from a long day of administering karmic justice in incredibly violent ways. I've come to the conclusion that I need a change of pace, in terms of pastimes. Send videos of topless tarts in terror, geeks in space, and anything in which Sybil Danning gets naked or killed, and I might send you some of my adventures.

Your pal (you hope),  
Sam Uzi "The Backlash"  
San Francisco

Dear Sam:  
Coagulations of hideously evil cosmic forces?  
You work for the city government or something?

Joe Bob:  
Now that the Commies are morally bankrupt enough to try capitalism, do you see drive-in theaters popping up all over Russia like so many zits on the face of Lenin?

Ben Thayer  
San Jose

Dear Ben:  
Sure, I can see the double bill now: "Night of the Living Hydro-electric Dam" and "The Ukraine Chainsaw Repair."

Dear Joe Bob,  
What I like about your column is the illusion that just me and 49 other really special people are your best friends and you read our letters yourself and everything.  
Stay in touch with your soul, dude.

Donna Stull  
Las Cruces, N.M.

Dear Donna:  
You don't expect us to actually *show* your letter to the very busy Mr. Briggs, do you?

Joe Bob,

After reading your latest re Ugly on a Stick, I have an idea. If you want to make some extra bucks, I think you should go on tour with Ugly. If she's half as bad as you say, people will pay real money to stare at her (like a sideshow at the circus). Don't worry,

**Communist Alert! Still no signs of life for the I-77 Drive-in in Statesville, N.C., which was once called 'the most modern drive-in in the South.'** Jim Hall has been unable to get it going again after three years of darkness and reminds us that, without eternal vigilance, it can happen here.

you don't have to look at her. When not on display, you can keep a burlap bag (with airholes in it; we don't want to the animal rights people on your case) on her face.

Keep doing what you do best,  
J. Rothman  
Los Angeles

Dear J.:  
I could never put Ugly-on-a-Stick in a sideshow. That would be cruel.

I'm thinking of a steel cage with peepholes, something like that.

Joe Bob Briggs,  
It's Sunday, and I'm sitting here at work thinking about why I'm working

for people that Bombed Pearl Harbor. What has America become? I guess everything's for the almighty dollar.

Jim Solven  
Hayward, Calif.

Dear Jimbo:  
Not *everything* is for the almighty dollar.

Most things are for the almighty yen.

Dear Mr. Bob:  
Your review of "Goodnight, Sweet Marilyn" took me by surprise. You see, Terrence Locke died in 1982, and I was wondering if it's the same person, in an old movie. He did play in a movie with Misty Rowe called "Goodbye, Norma Jean." Perhaps they recut that. I'm curious, because I lived with Mr. Locke until he died, and he never spoke of "Goodnight, Sweet Marilyn." Perhaps there is another Terrence Locke. Would you please let me know?

Thank you,  
Pat Sheehan  
Santa Rosa, Calif.

Dear Pat:  
Larry Buchanan, the greatest conspiracy theorist drive-in movie-maker working today, sometimes spends ten years working on the same movie, and then he gives it three, four different titles, so it's very possible that the movie completed in 1988 was shooting in 1982. That's the kind of drive-in genius Larry is. He's a perfectionist. And now that we're discussing it, if Marilyn Monroe was killed by the Mafia, CIA, Castro and Bobby Kennedy, then who killed Terrence Locke? The Soviets? Marina Oswald?

Joe Bob,  
And I quote: "In elevating the shadow to primary reality, the denizens of the cave substituted the projected image (shadow) for the substance itself. This substitution was the first condition of a non-objective

reality and still serves as a paradigm for the forms of projection."

Written by some guy called John Bloom, I saw John Bloom on the cover of your first book. You ain't hangin' around no int'llectual types are ya? If this guy can talk about shadows as "non-objective reality" or "a paradigm," imagine all he would have to say about Reform School Girls. You'd hafta lock him out the car just to hear the groaning, let alone the cucumber jokes. Don't spill blood, walk on two legs, and all that,

Stefan F.

Columbus, Ohio

Dear Stefan:

I don't know how many times I have to tell you people: John Bloom is dead.

Joe Bob!

How cum you haven't reviewed the best (only?) Confederate horror film of all time, "2000 Maniacs"?

J. Thoenas,

**Communist Alert! The Frontier Drive-In on Highway 199 just outside Cave Junction, Ore., has a big "For Sale" sign on it, and the wind is not only whipping through the pines around the screen -- it's whipping through the screen.**  
**David Arthur of Ashland discovered the sad sight and reminds us that, without eternal vigilance, it can happen here**

Pacific Grove, Calif.

Dear J.:

"2000 Maniacs," the masterpiece by the King of Gore, Mr. Herschell Gordon Lewis, the second gore film ever made, came out in 1964. Your question is 26 years too late. But, yes, we showed it last year on my cable TV show, and the star, Playboy Playmate Connie Mason, after all these years, still can't remember her lines.

A couple weeks back I went down to Florida and met the Hersch-man in person, and he allowed that "2000 Maniacs" is actually his second favorite movie. His all-time personal choice is "A Taste of Blood," which was even more disgusting and almost always in focus.

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# BLAB!



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By Bryan Wendorf

In the 1950s William M. Gaines published a line of comic books that would be condemned by a Senate investigating committee as obscene and eventually would frighten most distributors away from selling the comics. With titles like "Weird Science," "Tales From the Crypt," "Haunt of Fear," and "Crime Suspenstory," E.C.'s pushed the envelope into a whole new realm of decadence.

For the generation of kids who loved the books, the censorship is still described as a trauma. (Next issue, in our no-nostalgia hidden subcultures of the 1950s feature -- Rock 'n Psycho -- you'll find out about the hearings that blasted both E.C. comics and Betty Page!)

Monte Beauchamp began *BLAB!* magazine as a homage to E.C. comics and invited illustrators and artists to described E.C.'s influence on their work. *BLAB!* has evolved from those humble origins to the beautiful once-a-year publication that contains controversial comic strips, the themes of avant-garde comics and weird culture in a fresh and original way. Available at comic book shops and by mail for \$8.95 (post paid) through Kitchen Sink Press, No. 2 Swamp Road, Princeton, WI 54968. *BLAB!* is a must!

*BRYAN: How did you become a fan of E.C. comics, the horror and crime comics of the 1950s accused of causing juvenile delinquency?*

**BLAB!  
BLAB!  
BLAB!**

**Keeping  
Censored  
Comix Alive!**

**MONTE:** My brother's 8th grade geography teacher had a stash of them and my brother mentioned that I liked *MAD* magazine and how I had dreamed of working for them. The teacher told him he had the original *MADs* when they were comic books and we had no idea what that meant. So my brother arranged a meeting and this teacher showed me a briefcase full of early Harvey Kurtzman *MAD* issues. After seeing those, the magazine no longer seemed to cut it. There were also copies of *Two Fisted Tales* and *Frontline Combat* and a *Panic* with a Basil Wolverton cover. I flipped through them and saw these great graphics by Kurtzman, Wallace Wood, Bill Elder. This took place in

1968 and what I was seeing in Marvel comics at the time didn't come close to the quality in these early E.C.'s. It was a whole different perspective on art.

**BRYAN:** So you were in junior high?

**MONTE:** Yes. And I had seen Kurtzman's work, but hadn't known it. I saw my dad's *Playboy* stash and really liked its "Little Annie Fanny" comic strip -- but I didn't realize the creator, Harvey Kurtzman, had also started *MAD* comics and worked on all these other things. My dream was to be an artist at *Playboy* also. There are so many inter-connections with E.C., it boggles the mind. It shows how something from pop culture can affect different aspects of pop culture and society as a whole, I guess.

**BRYAN:** The first issue of *BLAB!* had lots of underground artists discussing the influence E.C. had on them.

**MONTE:** Yep, and underground comix wouldn't have existed without E.C. So the E.C. connection goes on and on and on. It's still happening to this very day.

**BRYAN:** *BLAB!* is available now in comic book stores everywhere -- how'd that come about?

**MONTE:** Denis Kitchen at Kitchen Sink Press approached me and said that he liked what I was doing. He offered to distribute and publish it, so with the third issue I got Joe Coleman from "Mondo New York" to do a 21-page piece on a mass murderer, I got Spain Rodriguez from ZAP, Chicagoan Dan Clowes who does

Eightball comics, lots of art... Charles Burns, Richard Sala, Drew Friedman, all these people who like E.C. comics contributed to the issue.

*BLAB!* has also run pieces on the "Mars Attacks" bubblegum card series, Bazooka Joe, a forum on Robert Crumb, who created "Fritz the Cat" and pissed off a lot of feminists. I've met lots of women who enjoy his work and find his stuff entertaining, but feminists don't seem to care for it. It wigs 'em out! So we had a forum on him and lots of artists critiqued him.

**BRYAN:** He makes fun of himself.

**MONTE:** He makes fun of everything! That's the beauty of Crumb. He lets it all hang out.

**BRYAN:** He is entertaining. What else do you like?

**MONTE:** I like *RAW* magazine and most of Art Spiegelman's stuff. I always rush out and get the new *RAW*. I liked *MAUS* and, for me, everything Spiegelman does turns to gold. I was glad he achieved success. I'm real happy for him, and I greatly appreciate what he's done for turning an adult audience on to comics.

**BRYAN:** In "Mondo New York," artist Joe Coleman was biting the heads off mice...

**MONTE:** That's not all he did either! His performance scared the shit out of me. When I met Joe Coleman he was completely different in real life than in the "Mondo New York" film. I went to his home. After I talked to him, I realized he had overcome a lot of bad things that happened in his life and since then his art and performances have taken on a different meaning for me. I don't always agree with it but I understand it.

To me, if Bukowski or William Burroughs could draw it would look like Joe Coleman's stuff. He is an authentic American original. Coleman is to comics what Bukowski and Burroughs are to fiction.

**BRYAN:** I know Joe Coleman did that great poster for "Henry."

**MONTE:** Well, you know, "Henry" was too much for me. So was the poster.

**BRYAN:** Why?

**MONTE:** I watched the "Henry" film and it took me to places I didn't want to go. It was not like a slasher movie, "Henry" is extremely well made. It shook me up and bothered me.

From *BLAB!* #5, Copyright 1990 Joe Coleman



## "HEY! WHAT TH--?!?!"

A quick guide to comics and other ephemera now available at your local comics shop.

- **The Prisoner Trade Paperback** (DC Comics, \$19.95) - A collected edition of the four-issue "Authorized Sequel" to one of the greatest television shows of all time, written and illustrated by Dean Motter creator of *Mr. X*. Of course, it doesn't match the enigmatic original but who would really expect it to?

- **Weird Science #1, Tales From the Crypt #1 and Vault of Horror #1** (Gladstone Comics, \$2 each) - How many ways can these classic E.C. comics from the 50s be repackaged? If you're just becoming an E.C. fan/addict thanks to the HBO "Crypt" series, here's an affordable way to discover the originals. Each issue reprints two complete E.C. comics in their entirety.

- **Bad Lands #1** (Vortex Comics, \$3) - No, this isn't based on the Martin Sheen/Cissy Spacek film about thrillkiller Charlie Starkweather. It is, however, based on the Kennedy assassinations and the conspiracy theories surrounding them.

- **Exquisite Corpse** (Dark Horse Comics, 3-issue series, \$2.50 each) - This three-issue story can supposedly be read in any order, however, the order you read the books will affect how you perceive this tale of sex and horror. Probably the most original and unusual gimmick I've seen used in comics for a long time.

• **Splatter #1** (Northstar Comics, \$2.25) - No holds barred gore/horror anthology series. This issue will feature a story with female versions of the classic Universal monsters.

• **Cry For Dawn #2** (Cry For Dawn, \$2.25) - Another demented horror anthology book. Nice artwork and sexy cover that you have to see.

• **Breakthrough** (Catalan, \$13.95) - A deluxe album collection of great comic artists from both sides of the rusty iron curtain describing their reactions to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the imminent death of Communism.

• **The Glamorous Betty Page: Cult Model of the 1950s** (\$49.95) - An Italian trade paperback with 128 pages of St. Betty. Lots of bondage and nude shots. Expensive, but isn't she worth it?

• **Visual Addiction: The Art of Robert Williams** (Last Gasp, \$19.95) - A collection of Robert's latest experiments in sensory overload. Williams, along with Joe Coleman, will some day be considered among the greatest American painters of the 20th century. Send a copy to Jessie Helma for laughs.

• **Who's Had Who** (\$9.95) - The world's first historical sexual register. Authoritative and impeccably researched.

• **Clive Barker's Shadow In Eden** (\$39.95) - Hardcover collection of our favorite Hellraiser's non-fiction writing.

When I saw the poster my reaction was, "That is what a killer thinks." I don't want to be put inside the mind of a killer. The painting Joe did puts you right there. I love Joe Coleman's work, don't get me wrong. Some of his work. But there are pieces he has done that show me far more than I want to deal with. I like to go to the park, throw frisbee, listen to music. "Henry" forced me to confront a mentality I have no interest in.

*BRYAN: The film has caused major splits in film fandom.*

**MONTE:** I know. And don't misunderstand, the fact that it is as well made as it is, I think, makes me disturbed by it.

Joe Coleman has done paintings that I think go too far. He goes into subject matter I can't accept. But he does it all so fucking well. When a film or painting works that well I get lost in it. Then I have to stop and look away.

*BRYAN: How did *BLAB!* get into the theme of crime for this latest issue?*

**MONTE:** Well, E.C. had crime comics like "Crime" and "Shock Suspense." So we just jumped right in for a crime issue. People avoid doing crime comics these days, it's just all this horror shit - so I felt "let's jump in and do something different." My role as an editor is not to restrict. I'm more like a springboard for ideas. Crime seems like the thing to do. There is real

Copyright 1990 Joe Coleman



crime portrayed in this issue as well as fictional and pop portrayals of crime.

The *BLAB!* artists are more like illustrators who work in the comics format. People like Drew Friedman, Richard Sala, Joe Coleman, and all the rest -- they're all fuckin' great! *BLAB!* is like a party on paper.

**BRYAN:** What are your favorite comics?

**MONTE:** I like "Yummy Fur," "Eightball," "Raw," "Hup" and "Weirdo." "Weirdo" is about to end.

**BRYAN:** *No!*

**MONTE:** That's what I hear. One more issue and that's it.

**BRYAN:** Now *BLAB!* is being distributed all over Europe.

**MONTE:** Yep. I get letters now from readers in Japan, China and Spain! I did an interview that appeared in Finland and I can't even read it. Crazy.

Issue #4 was also held at the Canadian border for weeks because of the inside front cover. They thought it might be pro-drug. It was the "Just Say Yes..." ad. It was a joke but they didn't get it. So now we're doing it as a poster and a tee shirt, too! I guess I'm glad I managed to stir up some thought by this ad. They did eventually release it to Canada.

**BRYAN:** How do you feel about HBO's *"Tales From the Crypt?"*

**MONTE:** This is third or fourth version of the comics for me. It is a smash hit and many people are dealing with the plot twists for the first time. I grew up on the first version and that's what I like best. I don't think most people know the background of the show, it's connection to E.C. comics or the controversy these comics caused. But I'm glad the TV series is out there.

The original E.C. comics start at fifty to eighty bucks nowadays -- and go up, so that has taken E.C.'s away from the general public. That leaves the TV show and the Russ Cochran reprints to get the word out to the public. But the original comic format for me will always be the best.

**BRYAN:** Has *BLAB!* been noticed by the fine arts crowd?

**MONTE:** Funny you should mention it because I have been asked about doing a show of *BLAB!* artists. I probably will wait until the sixth issue comes out. It'll be a gallery show.

**BRYAN:** I know, in your daily life, you work as an art director. What else do you do?



Copyright 1990 Joe Coleman

**MONTE:** I jog. I like to go swimming, ride bicycles. I have a life away from appreciating just horror and weird comics. I'm also interested in painting. Music. Anything that communicates.

**BRYAN:** I think people who attend a Psychotronic Film Society meeting for the first time are surprised to discover that it is very different from typical comic "fan boy" behavior.

**MONTE:** Hey, I've championed you guys from the beginning! Even when the writers go too far (laughter). As for the women in the group --

**BRYAN:** *The Women's Auxiliary.*

**MONTE:** Pick up a copy of *BLAB!* #5, *Yummy Fur* and *Eightball* and let's get together and talk about them. I think it's great women are involved in this. Sure beats a comic convention.

**BRYAN:** I notice movie directors, artists and writers mentioning E.C. comics as an influence in their work all the time. Russ Cochran is reprinting them again -- *Tales From the Crypt*, *The Vault of Horror*, *Weird Science*, *The Haunt of Fear* -- all those titles will now be available cheap... influencing the fourth generation of E.C. fans.

**MONTE:** There were people who called them obscene then and to this day they still do, and I think those same people will be offended. The new *BLAB!* is fascinating. In the crime issue, *BLAB!* #5, there's a strip by Lloyd Dangle on people who escaped the clutches of Ted Bundy. One of those people was Deborah Harry of the rock band Blondie. I was stunned how the strip came out. But I'm sure some "group" will find it offensive.

• **Eyeball #3 (\$5.50)** - A glossy import magazine covering the sick, strange, wonderful world of European horror and exploitation. Includes coverage of Alejandro Jodorowsky's films.

• **Faces of Fear (\$14.95)** - Signed, limited edition portfolio of Steve Bissette's art, five black and white plates.

• **Good Girl Art Quarterly (Americomics, \$3.50)** - A new magazine reprinting classic "girl art" of the 40s and 50s. Bill Ward's "Torchy" and Frank Frazetta's "Loole Lazybones" are both included.

• **3-D Substance (3-D Zone, \$2.95)** - Steve Ditko, Ayn Rand objectivist and Spiderman creator, creates a new superhero character especially for 3-D.

• **A1 True Life Bikini Confidential (Atomeka, \$6.95)** - 80-page special with stories about women in bikinis. Includes "Flaming Carrot" and "Mr. Monster" stories and a pin-up section with various artists' renderings of Betty Page.

• **Night of the Living Dead #1 (Fantaco, \$4.95)** - This adaptation of George Romero's film classic is faithful to the original while expanding on some scenes. Also has 16 pages of professionals' opinions on the flick.

• **Slutburger Stories #1 (Rip Off Press, \$2.50)** - Mary Fleener's new comic tells the sordid story of the LA club scene. Loose sex, substance abuse and gratuitous violence presented in her unique graphic style.

• **Video Watchdog #1** - Tim Luca's consumer guide to

Joe Coleman does a great 22-page strip on a mass murderer from the 1930s that is very compelling, also. There's other stuff that is really great in the issue.

**BRYAN:** *E.C. got into just as much trouble for the crime comics as they did the horror.*

**MONTE:** Oh yes and that's why *BLAB!* had to get around to doing a crime issue!

Skip Williamson does a great funny piece on crime in the issue also.

**BRYAN:** *Skip's paintings are great. Who else is in the issue?*

**MONTE:** Drew Friedman is in the issue. Doug Allen, who does this degenerate strip called "Steven",

Richard Sala, Dan and J.R. Clowes, Spain. There's an article by Ray Zone on the history of crime comics and lots more. I'm really happy with this issue. Joe Coleman's art is on the cover and there's an interview in which he tells why he blows himself up on stage and at parties, and all sorts of wild stuff.

**BRYAN:** *When Coleman bit the heads off mice and blew himself up in "Mondo New York" he made that movie.*

**MONTE:** Yeah, he sure did. He's a wildman on stage. And he's a wildman in the pages of *BLAB!* So all your readers should check out the new issue which will be on the stands by the end of June.

sick flicks has been one of the highlights of *Fangoria/Gore Zone*, now he's publishing his own magazine. Good luck, Tim! My subscription's in the mail.

• **Traci Lords 1991 16-Month Calendar (\$8.95)** - The star of John Water's "Cry Baby," Traci is destined to become the sex symbol of the 90s. Get two copies, one to display and one to save for the cult following that will pay big bucks for it in thirty years.

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# MUSIC TO BREAK THE LEASE BY!

By Steve Levin



Everybody who's anybody showed up at the Clive Barker party and Steve Levin was no exception.

Photo Copyright 1990 Pat Schanning

**R**hino Records released a CD of Screamin' Jay Hawkins material titled "Voodoo Idol." It's a "best of" covering the mid-50s to the late 60s. The mix is quite good. Yes, no you can hear all the subtleties of "Constipation Blues" in full digital sound. "Voodoo Jive" and Capitol's "Esquerita-The Capitol Collectors' Series" pushed me into the era of CD. The stuff I listen to is strictly low-fi. But when engineered properly, like the Screamin' J and Esquerita collections, I have to admit I like digital... A lot of reissue CDs leave me with the same feeling I get from trying to watch a colorized movie, but there's more and more CDs creeping into my collection.

Let me take this opportunity to slam Rhino, however, for their lack of cajones. Hey guys, with stuff like your lame Billboard and Sounds of the 70s collections, you're well on your way to becoming the K-Tel of the 90s. Rhino sent out all kinds of promo stuff when compact disc technology first took off. I got buttons and bumper stickers from them with the slogan "Save the LP." Well, jive. \*!\*@\* ... what about the news in the trades that you're dropping vinyl product?

The new 3-D Invisibles album is a kicker. The boys are on their third LP of pure psychotronic rock and roll. "They Won't Stay Dead" on Neurotic Bop is more of the same quality stuff. Every song is a winner. I have to thank these guys for never letting down their dedication to horror rock and roll.

Stay sick 3-Ds and how about a Zombie Surfers album? Check out Creepy Rick's columns in *Film Threat* magazine.

Tex Edwards and Out on Parole's new LP "Fardoe Me, I've Got Someone to Kill" on Sympathy flipped me out. Sympathy is more of a thrash label, but Tex is more cow than cow-punk. Almost all these cuts are covers. Chances are you've never heard most of them, though Tex's demented twang and expert back-up band bring new energy to tunes like "Strangler in the Night," "Psycho," "Rubber Room," "LSD Made a Wreck of Me" and, my favorite, "You Ain't Gonna Live to See Another Saturday Night." Tex is closer to Nasville, by way of Hell, than bands like the Hickoids. Look for an interview in a future issue of IOAM. Joe Bob, check it out.

"Psycho Serenade" on Beware and "Forbidden City Dog Food" on Vip Vop continue in the tradition of the "Wavy Gravy" series with lots of trashy tunes and cheesy instrumentals, sandwiched between radio ads for psychotronic films.

Check out "The Evil Dope" by Phil Phillips and the uncensored take of a promo for the Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis film "The Caddy."

"Bo Did It" on Satan Records is a cool comp of strictly Bo Diddley-styled groups. Also from Satan comes "Gamma Kappa Kappa," an LP of "frat" rock that blows Rhino's "Frat Rock" series out of the water. One side is all

covers but done by small label geek bands The Jermis, The Del Counts, Four Bits & Tax, and Trez Trezo. The B-side is more sub-sonic scum like "Stronger Than Dirt" by A. Jacks and the Cleansers and "Garbage Man" by the Snowmen. Play this loud and dance, dance, dance.

Norton Records just released three volumes of rare stuff from my favorite guitar hero Link Wray. If you love Link you'll love "Link Wray Swan Demos 64" on Hangman. "Rumble" (the Svengoolie theme song) was a wicked instrumental full of rawraunch but check out these demos Swan considered too dangerous to release.

Rudi Protrudi, lead guitarist for the Fuzztones, formed a band called Link Protrudi and the Jaymen to play Link-style intros and their album "Missing Links" on Skyclad is true to Link's sound. The Fuzztones latest album is as lousy as this is good. (Watch out for the lame Batman theme cover on the B-side of L.P. & The Jaymen--it's just dead boring.)

Go out now and buy the complete Bevis Frond catalogue on Reckless. Try the CD on this one, especially. Bevis is the new hope for a real psychedelic revival. The Frond is the real thing. He does everything - writes, sings, produces and plays guitar. Kind of like a cross between Hendrix and Cream-era Clapton. He's not a flower punk poser. Bevis makes this stuff his own and puts his soul in it. Start off with "Inner

Marshland, Miasma" or his new "Any Gas Faster" which is a masterpiece. Bevis is also in a band called Outskirts of Infinity whose LPs are similar, with psychedelic layers of sound and lots of guitar interplay. Outskirts LPs are a little harder to find but search them out.

Most of the LPs and CDs in this column can be obtained from Wax Trax, Dr. Wax Records, Reckless, Vintage Vinyl in Chicago or mail order through: Midnight Records, P.O. Box 390, Old Chelsea Station, New York, NY 10011 or Crypt Records, P.O. Box 9151, Morristown, NJ 07960. Enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope or postage for return info on prices, etc., and mention IT'S ONLY A MOVIE.

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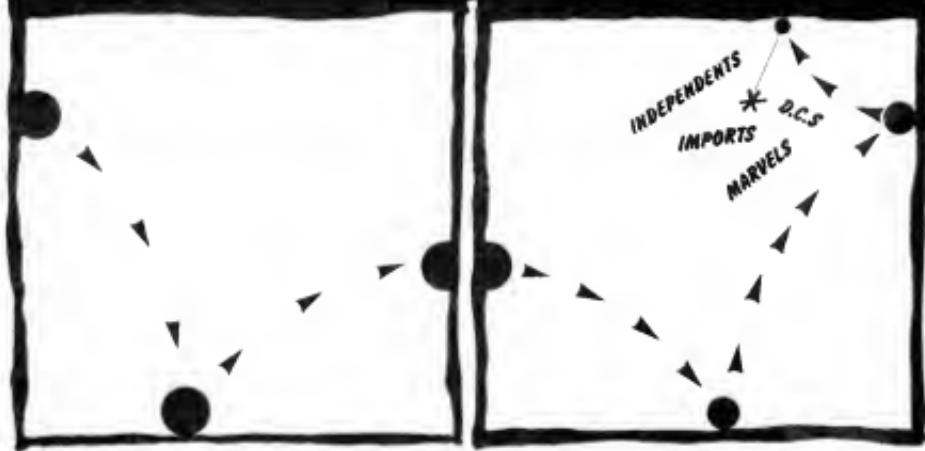
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-Clive Barker

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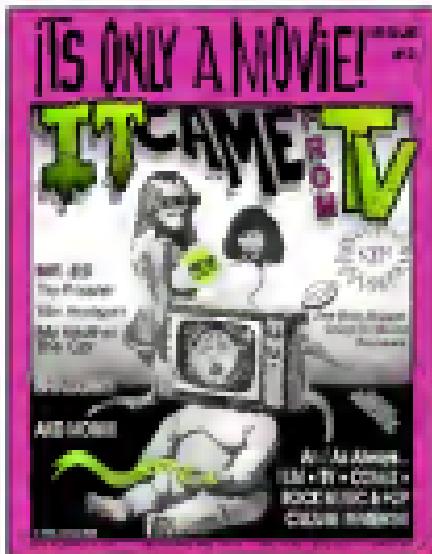
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